

COLUMBIA
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REVIEW



MARCH/APRIL 2001

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NEW YORK RULES

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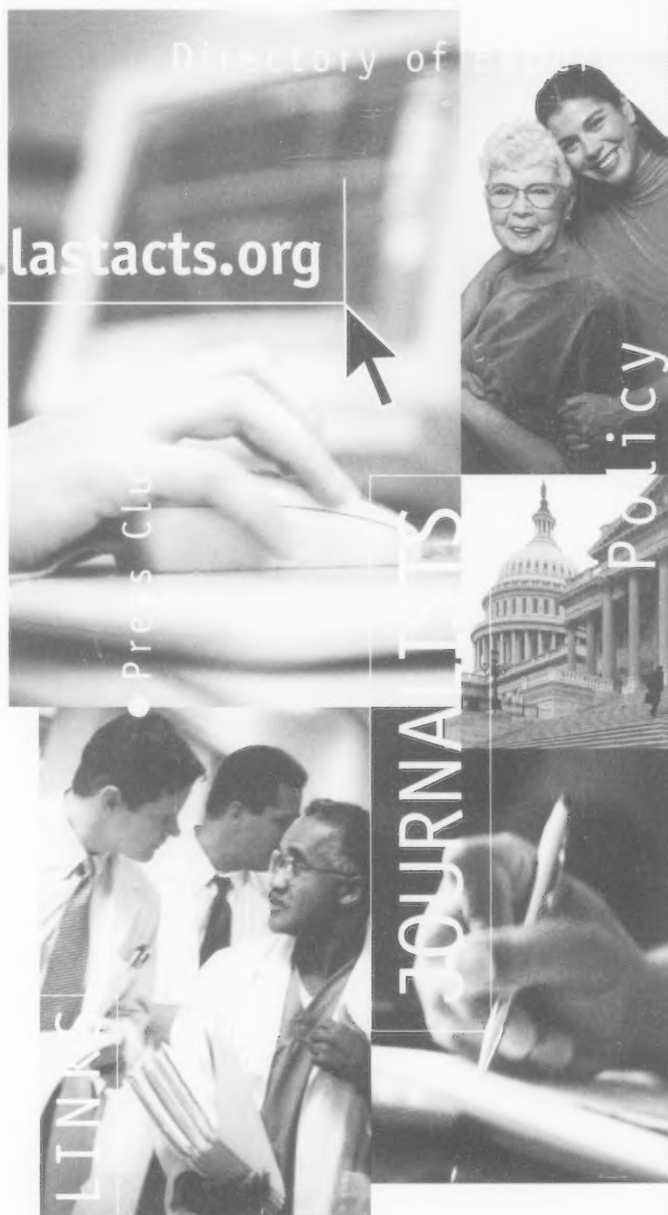
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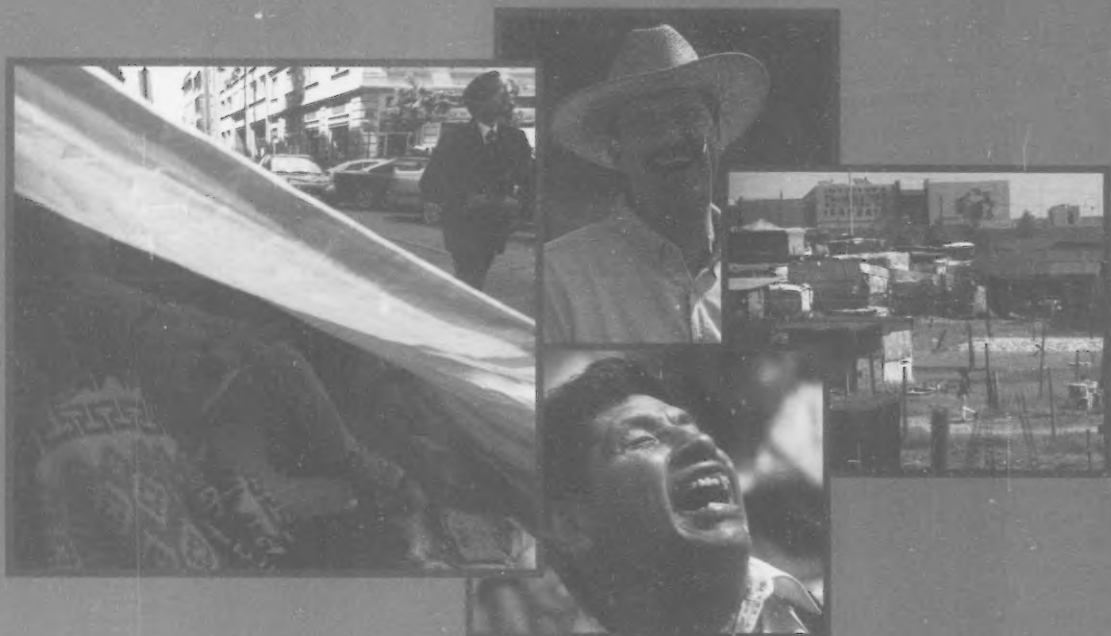
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HEARST: WHERE JOURNALISM OF DISTINCTION IS AN EVERYDAY STORY



Houstonians discovered why a Fox in Mexico could make a difference to their economy at home.

Last July's election of Vicente Fox as president of Mexico ended 71 years of one-party rule, raising the country's hopes for an era of prosperity and democracy. The election also affected Houston, a city that has a huge stake in Mexico's trade activities and is home to tens of thousands of Mexican immigrants and their first- and second-generation descendants.

In the special section "A New Sun," Houston Chronicle readers got a complete analysis of the long-range problems confronting Mexico and the

agenda of Fox's high-level advisers for solving them. By interviewing a diverse cross section, including politicians, academics, farmers, schoolteachers, and housewives, the Chronicle defined four major challenges that Mexico faces: rural poverty, endemic corruption, a unionized bureaucracy and a dismal educational system.

More than 30 extensive, full-color charts broke down the statistics, which ranged from Mexico's illiteracy rate to the number of

telephone lines. Articles provided readers with a clear assessment of the history, sociology and economics of Mexico and its people.

Helping people understand how political changes in another country could impact their community is one more way the Hearst Newspapers enrich readers' lives every day.



If you'd like to read more on this series, you can find it on: www.houstonchronicle.com/mexico.

Letter from The Publisher

Last fall Victor Navasky and I taught a class at the Columbia Graduate School of Journalism about "The New York Media Elite." It was an unusual course, but even more unusual was that the students' papers would be considered for publication in CJR, a rare opportunity to appear along with our regular professional contributors.

Navasky, the Delacorte Professor of Magazine Journalism at the school, told the class to consider their efforts an "adventure." For the students, the adventure included attending a black-tie benefit dinner for the Committee to Protect Journalists, an event crowded with media notables. They also received firsthand reports from New York's media community.

More than ten thousand journalists work on the island of Manhattan, and this has resulted in an unparalleled concentration of media power, even in the age of the Internet. This issue considers and examines what that concentration means.

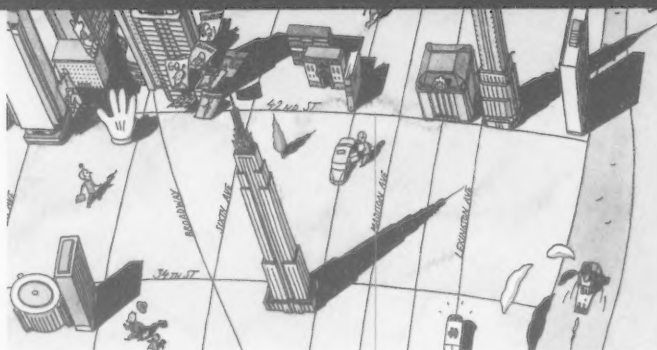
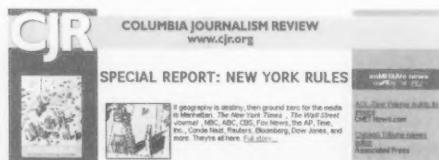
You can also keep track of it all with a pullout-and-save Manhattan Media Map, as well as The Shapers, a list of 200 New Yorkers who affect the national agenda for news and ideas.

About half the students have signed pieces in the issue, and the rest contributed with story files and research. They are: Leslie Akst, Arun Das, Timothy Eaton, Lindsay Faber, Camille Finefrock, John Giuffo, Adeel Hassan, Donna Ladd, Hilary Lane, Caryn Meyers, Emily Novack, Erica Pearson, Evan Serpick, Victoria Still, and Vikram Sura. I have a feeling we will see some of those bylines again somewhere.

— David Laventhol

CJR.ORG'S NEW LOOK

CJR's Web site, at cjr.org, has a new look and several new features, including daily headline news from three sources — media news, via the Project for Excellence in Journalism; world press news, from the Committee to Protect Journalists; and news related to media-company ownership, from our own Aaron Moore. Please check it out.



Contents

SPECIAL REPORT: NEW YORK RULES 20

MANHATTAN MINDSET What New Yorkers think and why it matters, by Brent Cunningham 22

NO DEGREES OF SEPARATION 28

The work-and-party media mix, by Lindsay Faber

The event of the year, by Michael Hoyt

My search for the media elite, by Vikram Sura

Rules of the game, by Eric Alterman

NEW MEDIA IN THE OLD-MEDIA CAPITAL by Donna Ladd 36

MARKET DRIVEN The media elite's new tilt by Michael Massing 37

PLAYERS ONLY *Foreign Affairs* still matters, but... 42

By Camille Finefrock

SNAPSHOTS Five New York media figures: Cathleen Black, 44

Gerald Boyd, David Halberstam, Larry Kramer, André Schiffrin

THE VIEW FROM ELSEWHERE with Steve Wasserman, 46

Phil Bronstein, Sandra Mims Rowe, Jay Harris, Jim Squires,

Brandt Ayers, Tim McGuire, Gregory Favre, Paul Tash,

Gene Collier, Geoffrey Cowan, and Tony Ridder; and

cartoonist Andrew Lucas of the *Orange County Register*

PLUS: PULLOUT FOLLOWING PAGE 20

THE MANHATTAN MEDIA MAP AND "THE SHAPERS"

ARTICLES

SO, WHO WON FLORIDA? Hanging with the chads. By Russ Baker 16

COMING OF AGE Creating a new beat. By Mary Ellen Schoonmaker 53

DEPARTMENTS

LETTERS 4 • CURRENTS 8 • ROLE MODEL 13

DARTS & LAURELS 14 • LOWER CASE/INSIDE BACK COVER

VOICES

JACK GERMOND 56 • C.A. TUGGLE 57

ROBERT BAUGHER 58 • LAWRENCE K. GROSSMAN 60

ANDREW KOHUT 61 • GENEVA OVERHOLSER 62

BOOKS

DAILY NEWS, ETERNAL STORIES By Jack Lule 64

Reviewed by Christopher Hanson

ME AND TED AGAINST THE WORLD By Reese Schonfeld 67

Reviewed by Neil Hickey

BOOK REPORTS By James Boylan 70

COVER ILLUSTRATION BY INGO FAST

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 24, 2000

PARADE

General Powell
with Jimmy
Dhanagom, 12,
of Cheever, Mo.,
and Joshua
Berkowitz, 6,
of Burke, Va.

One of America's most respected and admired
citizens urges each of us to make a contribution
that really counts this holiday season.

Make A Promise To America's Children

BY GEN. COLIN L. POWELL

INSIDE: Are You Ready For The Solar Eclipse?

*The Sunday Magazine Where
The World's Finest Journalists Write For
America's Leading Newspapers*

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MEDIA MALFEASANCE

Thanks to Christopher Hanson for "All the News That Fits the Myth" (CJR, January/February). I used to be so proud of America's free press. Then I found myself reading he lie after easily detectable lie. There would have been no election coup if the press had told the truth.

Christopher Hanson, thank you for calling a spade a spade. Unfortunately, it's a bloody shovel.

ABIGAIL QUART
New York, New York

The overall problem with the press coverage — or should we say *noncoverage* — of Bush's many chunks of hidden history ("Missing the DUI Story," CJR, January/February) is that, unlike any previous politician or even celebrity, there was no media storm demanding he release his medical or school or military or criminal records.

This was and is unprecedented. I belonged to a team of concerned citizens who researched the missing years and when we talked to *The New York Times* and *George* magazine about this matter, both admitted that Bush and his people in Texas were stonewalling the press and refusing even minimal cooperation with normal everyday questions.

So I wrote to both publications and requested that they have headlines saying BUSH CONCEALS QUESTIONABLE PAST and then detail the stonewalling coupled with cries for release of records, especially

the missing military records we needed.

They bluntly refused. I couldn't figure out why. Tom-paine.com also tried to budge our media into at least pressuring Bush to come clean, but they were all intent on figuring out if Gore really said he

was in *Love Story*. When we got under their skins, they told us that the missing two years of 1972-1973 were too long ago. They also said no one cared, yet whenever we

polled the public on our own always there was intense interest in the information concerning the missing military years. So the real question here is why our media suddenly got cold feet whenever any subject of Bush's malfeasance arose.

And why the press changed the explosive DUI story from questions about Bush's past, one that has more than three arrests, to who revealed this essential information.

We smelled a rat here and the corpse still stinks.

ELAINE SUPKIS
Berlin, New York

The mass moaning over the missed George Bush DUI story is all well and good, but it is a minor aspect of campaign coverage of Bush. A larger story that had been studiously avoided during the campaign despite the pleas of informed citizens was set to break in a big way on the Friday before the election. Medal of Honor winners Senators Kerrey and Inouye had conducted a press

conference calling attention to George W. Bush's year-long absence from his post of duty with the Texas Air National Guard during wartime — a charge that could have resonated with millions of veterans poised to vote. That scandal was obliterated by the lesser DUI story within just a couple of hours.

Over six months prior to the election, the AWOL story was addressed only minimally by a few media outlets, despite the fact that thousands of e-mails, faxes, and phone calls had been made to members of the press and to members of Congress providing careful detail and documentation, including his own damning records that were obtained through FOIA by a citizen activist. Additionally, hundreds of thousands of flyers had been distributed, demonstrations held, and call-ins made to talk radio.

And yet, like so many other aspects of the unexamined George, the national press — for reasons we can only assume were sloth, cowardice, or collusion — was mostly silent. In any other profession this would be malfeasance.

We won't be making the mistake again of trying to convince established news outlets to properly inform the American people. We will simply develop more avenues that go above and around the print and broadcast media. Eliminate the irrelevant middleman. (That would be you all.)

Too often now we are seeing citizen activists who are ahead of the pundits and the reporters, who simply burp up superficial stories provided by the spinners. You



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EILEEN SMITH
Salem, Oregon

IMMODEST PROPOSAL

Neil Hickey's article on WBBM's hard-news "experiment" in Chicago (CJR, January/February) examined why it failed. Here's how it could succeed: Let's abolish commercial broadcasting in the United States. I've recently taken to listening to the taxpayer-funded BBC World Service over the Internet (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice>) and I'm stunned at how its reporting blows away anything in America, including NPR (which, due to heavy reliance on corporate funding, is a very different species of public broadcasting from the BBC). No fluff, cute animal stories, talking-head shows, or pseudo-intellectual commentaries. And no commercials, and no commercials masquerading as "underwriting announcements." Just hard news. Give it a listen.

Am I tilting at windmills? Perhaps. The FCC and Congress are obedient lapdogs to the National Association of Broadcasters. But if broadcasters continue to forsake their public service obligations because of ridiculously high profit expectations, they should be stripped of the right to use our airwaves.

LEE NICHOLS
former media critic
The Austin Chronicle
Austin, Texas

BELATED NOTICE

Those of us who read *The Washington Monthly* faithfully don't know whether to laugh or grimace at CJR's sudden discovery that well-paid reporters are failing to cover the losers in the "new economy" ("News in the Age of Money," November/December). The *Monthly*, editor Charles Peters in particular, has been pointing out for years that poverty, labor, regulatory, and even consumer issues once championed by blue-collar reporters are now ignored or dismissed by stock-owning "content providers."

That the country's leading journal of journalism let this shameful behavior grow and thrive for decades without comment is proof of just how low U.S. journalism has sunk since "Harvest of Shame." I can't imagine Edward R. Murrow sparing a frame for a dot.com adolescent, especially when there are silicon-chip factory victims to be interviewed.

LISA AUG
Frankfort, Kentucky

CONSEQUENTIAL COVERAGE

In his January/February "Book Report" about *Grassroots Journalism*, my alternative journalism textbook, James Boylan calls the news articles I reprinted from community and labor newspapers "prolix." Perhaps they were. But Boylan fails to mention the reason I chose them as exemplars: each of these articles resulted in concrete, measurable improvements in the quality of people's lives in the communities they

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toward
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Environmental
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were written for. A defective nuclear plant was prevented from opening. Threatened high-wage jobs were kept in a community that sorely needed them. And these changes were accomplished not from above but by the activism of ordinary people working together, informed and encouraged by fair, well-researched, and accurate reporting in their local newspaper.

I would argue that it was this kind of journalism the founders had in mind when they composed the First Amendment. This journalism, concerned with pragmatic, local solutions to the most important issues of our day — the widening chasm between rich and poor, the environmental crisis — is scarce, verging on extinct, in the mainstream media. (Every daily has a business section; none I know of has a labor section.) It was my hope in writing *Grassroots Journalism* that it would lead aspiring journalists to consider working for the non-corporate media, the closest thing we have to a truly free press.

EESHA WILLIAMS
Adjunct professor
of nonfiction writing
Long Island University
Sag Harbor, New York

SILENT SUNDAYS

I applaud Russ Baker's "Inner Circles" piece (CJR, November/December). I can remember when the Sunday morning talk shows were the place to go to get some insight. Now, they are worse than the newsmagazines. The Sunday windbags have lost my vote — and I'm not doing a recount anytime soon.

SYLVIA GURINSKY
Pembroke Pines, Florida

REBUTTING CRITICS

Geneva Overholser's column, "Washington's News Council — Why It Should Survive"

(CJR, January/February) was a welcome endorsement of our organization. However, the "leading editors" she cited in her piece — Joann Byrd of the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, Mike Fancher of *The Seattle Times*, Chris Peck of the *Spokane Spokesman-Review*, and Dave Zeeck of the *Tacoma News Tribune* — made some critical comments about the WNC that must be answered.

First, Overholser wrote that the "consensus" of these editors was that John Hamer, our executive director, is "a media-bashing, conservative ideologue." That characterization is incorrect. Since helping start the Washington News Council in 1998, Hamer has been professional, nonpartisan, balanced, and fair in every respect. We and other news council members would not continue to participate had it been otherwise. Besides, he has no vote in our complaint hearings.

Second, "some of the editors" suggested that several of our founding board members and a few current public members have "an ax to grind." Many of our council members and founders, as active public figures, have been in the media spotlight in the past. But to imply that they are trying to strike back at this state's media through the news council is simply wrong.

Third, Overholser wrote that the editors "rapped the funding" of the news council, whose major support has come from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. The Gates foundation is widely recognized for promoting many nonprofit programs with no "strings" attached. Moreover, the Gates grant provides only about half of our annual budget; the rest comes from a wide range of other foundations, individuals, associations, and corporations statewide. And we recently received our first major donation from a leading newspaper publisher. If me-

dia leaders are concerned about diversifying our funding, we would welcome their contributions.

Finally, Fancher of the *Times* is quoted as saying a news council can "only work if it originates from within the press and is supported by the press." Given the current public mistrust and skepticism toward the media, as confirmed by numerous national surveys, we believe that the opposite is true. To be most credible, a news council should be an outside, independent organization that has some media members and support, but is not controlled or primarily funded by the press.

We repeat our open invitation to this state's media leaders to become involved with the Washington News Council and help us shape the organization.

EDDIE REED

President/Public member

HERB ROBINSON

Vice president/Media member

Washington News Council
Seattle, Washington

CORRECTIONS

An article in the January/February issue referred readers to a Web address for the Minnesota News Council that was out of date. The correct address is <http://www.mtn.org/newscouncil>.

In an incident described in the November/December article "Letter from Silicon Valley," the names of the *San Francisco Chronicle* and the *San Francisco Examiner* were inadvertently transposed. This is how the sentence should have read: "In one already legendary case, an *Examiner* staffer, when asked to describe the job she wanted, not only suggested a roving reporter position that would enable her to travel the world, but also tried to stick her *Chronicle* counterpart with a rotten desk beat."

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CURRENTS

IN REVIEW: PLOT TWIST IN THE DOT.COM DRAMA?

In the two years I worked as a writer and editor for Fox News Online (1997 and 1998), News Corporation's chief, Rupert Murdoch, visited our Manhattan offices exactly twice. Roger Ailes, who runs Fox's news network, came once, for a rally-the-troops talk. The rest of the time we generally heard nothing about what corporate executives thought about our little experiments with journalism on their Web site.

The flow of new equipment and personnel seemed endless. The stock market bubble, then still filling with hot air, was big news. Then, last spring, the bubble burst, and corporate bosses everywhere were suddenly paying rapt attention to their digital properties. In January, Murdoch shut down the office and laid off more than 200 people at the FoxNews and Fox Sports Web sites, part of a cut-and-run strategy that brought the online operations under the control of their respective television networks, a strategy adopted by CNN two weeks later.

The Industry Standard runs a "layoff tracker" on its Web site (<http://search.thestandard.com/texis/trackers/layoff>). As of February 26, it counted 59,237 jobs as lost since December 1999, a significant portion of them media jobs. In January, the magazine's own parent company, Standard Media International, laid off 36 employees (7 percent of its staff); New York Times Digital, citing a softening in the Net advertising market, eliminated 69 positions; Disney

said it would lay off 400 and abandon Go.com, its Internet portal. And the list goes on.

You won't hear much cheering, but few argue with the sense of inevitability that greets each new round of layoffs. New Media has become part of Big Media, and, thus, Big Business. A lot of experts feel that those large staffs and

online journalism is at least temporarily diminished. As people file out the door, morale is usually not far behind. Ideas that drive the medium forward, experiments that will one day create a unique mode of news delivery, are not exactly nurtured in the gloom.

But retrenchment in the industry isn't likely to put a per-

sistency and depth. Some of these sites will stick around, though their long-term survival is far from assured. But without a distinctive voice or a laser focus, news sites are left with headline news. And headlines, as Quittner puts it, "are as fungible as water at this point."

But text is not the only possibility. Broadcasters — and newspaper companies with broadcast holdings — have relied on text to reach the widest possible audience. Their ultimate advantage may lie in their inherent strength, the moving image. Broadcasters dealing in text narratives are like restaurants that are tweaking the menu while the dirt road outside is widened into a federal highway. That new road is broadband technology, and as a majority of the wired population comes to embrace it, video will play a greater role in online news. If there is to be a new kind of online content, the adoption of broadband is its likeliest catalyst. "We're working on visual presentations of the news that are not just a duplication of television, but that take the best of the Web and the best of television and make that a better experience online," says Jim Walton, president of CNN Networks/USA for the CNN News Group.

Most of big media's boldest experiments in online news are yet to come. Indeed, a new kind of content may be no further off than it was before the bubble burst. Who knows? Maybe by the time they find it, they will have also found a way to pay for it.

— Frank Houston

Total Layoffs

59,237 as of Feb. 26, 2001

Source: *TheStandard.com's Layoff Tracker*

editorial budgets were just as unrealistic as the high stock valuations that allowed them to exist in the first place. "Everybody wanted to show that they were going to fight this oncoming juggernaut head-on, by throwing tons of resources at it," says Joshua Quittner, managing editor of *On* magazine, and a veteran of early Internet journalism. "But this was a real Vietnam. This was not a problem that more manpower could solve."

Even the new behemoth, AOL Time Warner, is subject to the same growing pains. John Pavlik, executive director of the Center for New Media at Columbia, says AOL/TW can help set online standards high. But, he adds, "with AOL laying off an estimated 2,000 and CNN laying off an estimated 400 people, 130 of whom will be from CNN.com, online journalism may take a pretty severe hit."

With fewer journalists acting within tighter budgets under increasingly cautious executives, there's no question that

manent brake on the progress of Web journalism. In a time when profits remain elusive, it's not surprising that executives question the wisdom of having separate reporters — network and online — covering the same beats. In the case of CNN, this means that a unit that now distributes headlines to pagers and other wireless devices will also write for CNN's Web operations.

The challenge for all "brick-and-mortar" media online has been to take advantage of a known brand and, at the same time, extend it in a new direction. This game has been played largely with text. Independent "pure play" content sites, with their IPOs, marketing gambits, and attitude, have garnered a big share of the online journalism spotlight. *Salon* and *Slate* distinguished themselves with original takes and literary flair, while others, such as the award-winning (and moribund) *APBNews.com* and *TheStreet.com*, offered inten-

Q & A: CLARENCE PAGE ON JESSE JACKSON

On January 18, *The National Enquirer* broke the story that Jesse Jackson had fathered a child out of wedlock, scooping the mainstream press. Clarence Page of the *Chicago Tribune* is part of that mainstream press. Page, a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist who started at the *Tribune* in 1969, is now a columnist based in the paper's Washington bureau, and an occasional guest on *The McLaughlin Group*, the *NewsHour* with Jim Lehrer, *ABC's Nightline*, and elsewhere. Page has covered Jackson for more than thirty years. He spoke with Lauren Janis, *CJR's* assistant editor, about his feelings on missing the "love child" story and about reporting on the private lives of public figures.



Clarence Page

A: After you don't get the scoop it sounds like sour grapes to say, "Well, we didn't want that story anyway." I wanted that story. If I could've gotten that story I would have reported it. I did not pursue it as aggressively as I did

earlier questions about Jackson's finances and spending of public money. But I did pursue it.

Q: Did you weigh the newsworthiness of the story — was Jesse Jackson a moral leader, was he Clinton's moral adviser, what money did he give his mistress — in order to gauge how aggressively to pursue it?

A: Of course. We make judgment calls every day as to how important a story is, what news is, and what has news value. The fact that this was allegedly going on during the Lewinsky affair made it worth pursuing. But the key question is, is it true that Jackson had a child out of wedlock with a woman who was a Washington official of the PUSH Coalition? Only after you've established that do the other questions become relevant. Was the severance pay really hush money? Whose money was used to pay for child support or the house? Those questions become relevant after you first establish that this is Jackson's out-of-wedlock child. And we just could not nail that down.

Q: Was there a feeling at the *Tribune* that this isn't "our kind of story," so we don't need to push it that far?

A: We will always be aggressive in looking for accountability of public figures. I was one of the first reporters to report on the questions surrounding Jackson's operation Push for Excellence and their expenditures of federal funds back in 1980. Jackson doesn't like accountability. But that hasn't stopped us. When it gets into private life, I know I am less aggressive in pursuing those stories.

Q: So did you approach this story with some ambivalence?



A: When it comes to the private life of any official, you approach it with ambivalence. But my philosophy is, when in doubt, let it out. Our impulse should be in favor of releasing information to the public, not suppressing it. After we've weighed everything and still we're ambivalent about it, my impulse is to go ahead and report it. Otherwise we're just becoming self-censors.

Q: Jesse Jackson is someone you have covered for decades. He's a leader of the black community. Did that affect your feelings of ambivalence toward this story?

A: As an African-American who has been covering the

Reverend Jackson and other civil rights figures for over thirty years, I particularly feel that it is my responsibility to be as aggressive as possible. I am obliged to give Jackson more scrutiny because I know him so well. Why should I kick the story to someone new on the beat? I am very concerned about leadership in general and about the quality of black leadership. And he is the most widely known and respected black leader. I feel obliged to be more aggressive because I feel a special

responsibility to African-Americans and others in Jesse Jackson's constituency to hold him accountable. Like a sort of consumer advocate.

Q: Yet while this recent story holds Jackson accountable, is this the kind of story you get excited about?

A: I got into this business and came to the *Chicago Tribune* and not *The National Enquirer*. Most of my colleagues and I didn't get

into this business for that kind of reporting. Here in Washington it's even more true that the media are not the sort of folks who thought they'd be trying to out-race *The National Enquirer* or the *Star*. So the '90s have been a very interesting time for us. I remember one day I was sitting at home at the dinner table reading the *Star* in the early days of the Lewinsky scandal, and my wife came in and said, "What are you reading?" And I said, "Hey, they got some of the best Monica coverage around."

Q: Do you think the line has shifted to where there is

CURRENTS

more interest in salacious stories about public figures?

A: I'm not sure which came first in that regard — the chicken or the egg. If the news has gotten more salacious because people are more interested in it, or because it has become more reportable.

Q: Is the decision to cover these kinds of stories something that you wrestle with, morally, ethically?

A: Oh I'm sure every journalist, when they hear a hot, juicy tip that is on the border between gossip and legitimate page-one news goes through a questioning process. Is this news? Or is it something that should be in somebody's gossip column with blind sourcing — "What well-known civil rights figure is playing back-door man to an outside woman?" That's a far cry from what you would call legitimate investigative reporting. We all wrestle with it, and I wrestled with it when I first heard this rumor about Jesse Jackson. But in this case, I think the media are perfectly justified in pursuing it.

I'm asking questions about it. Other journalists are asking questions about it. We agonize about it in journalism reviews, we agonize about it at seminars and conventions. But we are a daily business and we make these judgment calls every day. It's very difficult to lay down hard and fast rules that will apply to every situation, because every situation is different. That's why we call it news.

THE PRESS AND THE PUBLIC: AT ODDS OVER PRIVACY?

They have long been a prized tool for reporters and researchers: electronic dossiers filled with names, addresses, and other identifying information collected from credit records. For about \$20, journalists can buy the reports online, day or night, to confirm the identities of people in the news or to search for leads and contact information.

But this summer, as a consequence of financial privacy rules issued by Federal Trade Commission and other regulators, these reports will likely become less detailed, less current, and more expensive. The new regulations are the latest sign that the roiling privacy debate in America is beginning to have a tangible impact. All across the country, driver license information, property records, and databases of both public and private records are being closed off.

In the last few years, marketers, private investigators, and others have gained greater access to personal details about us, and some people are understandably upset. But little attention has been given to the potential impact of the privacy backlash on journalism.

Tom Boyer, a research editor at *The Seattle Times*, worries that state and local authorities, reacting to privacy fears, already are closing off access to government files inappropriately, and the FTC's new rules won't help. "What frightens me is that the FTC's standard will be advocated as the standard for public records," Boyer says.

At issue in the new regulations are "credit header" reports containing identifying

details collected from the credit records of nearly 200 million Americans. Credit bureaus routinely gather names, former addresses, Social Security numbers, and other personal details — along with financial data about accounts, spending habits, and the like — from banks, insurers, retailers, and other companies. The stated

'I CAN'T MAKE THE CASE THAT ANYONE HAS AN UNABRIDGED RIGHT TO ANYTHING OUT THERE IN PRIVATE DATABASES'

purpose is to track a customer's creditworthiness.

Over the years, though, the credit bureaus have made a profitable side business of selling information gleaned from the top sections of credit reports, containing names and other identifying details. The credit bureaus say the practice falls within existing federal credit regulations and does not compromise the privacy of financial information.

Companies such as CDB Infotek, USSearch.com and Equifax buy the identifying data, package it, and then resell the reports to reporters, marketers, private investigators, and law enforcement authorities.

But last May, the FTC and other regulators ruled that the creation of those reports could violate financial privacy provisions of the Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act, which overhauled the financial services

industry in 1999. As a result, the credit bureaus can't resell the data unless the individuals are notified, and the financial institutions are reluctant to do that. Thus, in order to stay in business, the information brokers will have to rely on other sources, which are likely to be more expensive and less detailed.

They are not happy about that, and have gone to court to try to overturn the FTC's interpretation. A group called the Individual Reference Services Group sued the FTC and other regulators in U.S. District Court in Washington, D.C. last summer, contending that by limiting the use of credit header information the new regulation will undermine anti-fraud programs and hinder efforts to locate missing children, deadbeat parents, and potential heirs of estates.

Privacy advocates insist that individuals ought to have a right to say no before corporate brokers profit from personal details gathered for an entirely different purpose. The rule takes effect in July. In the meantime, both sides are exchanging legal briefs.

Dan Gillmor, a technology columnist at the *San Jose Mercury News*, says, "I can't make the case that anyone, including us, has an unabridged right to anything out there in private databases. But I'm equally worried about any moves by politicians and bureaucrats to use people's legitimate fears of privacy invasion to close off publicly collected records that should remain public."

— Robert O'Harrow Jr.

MORE PRINT/TV PARTNERSHIPS

Television stations, long criticized for a lot of glitz and little substance in their news broadcasts, are now getting a chance to upgrade the quality of their news at little extra cost. More and more newspapers are stepping up their involvement with TV stations to get broader exposure for their stories. For the stations, this means more enterprise reporting, drawing on staff and resources beyond the dreams of most television news directors.

The Tribune Company's well-known drive for synergy has put *Chicago Tribune* reporters regularly on WGN, also owned by the company. The partnership has worked well enough in Chicago for Tribune to push all of its newspapers, including those acquired with the purchase of Times Mirror, to set up deals with local TV stations. Cameras are in each of the papers'

newsrooms, or will be shortly. New efforts are under way at the *Los Angeles Times* with KTLA and at *Newsday* with WPIX in New York — all owned by Tribune. The *South Florida Sun-Sentinel* is putting news on WFOR in Miami Beach. The *Hartford Courant* is working with WTIC and the *Baltimore Sun* is looking for a partner in its market.

Outside the Tribune Company, the paper furthest along is *The Tampa Tribune* (owned by Media General), working with WFLA. (See "The Multimedia Newsroom," May/June 2000). "The paper is quicker and more urgent because of our association with television," says Gil Thelen, the paper's executive editor. "And WFLA is more authoritative because of its access to Tribune facilities." Print reporters trained by broadcast instructors from the Universi-

ty of South Florida appear on air, and TV reporters write for the paper.

Getting wider distribution for its stories was a strong motivation for *The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* in setting up a working relationship with WTMJ, owned by the same company. Viewers use stories the paper provides to TV "as a tip source, and then want to read more about them in the paper," says Martin Kaiser, the editor. And by using the expertise of the newspaper, says Jeff Kiernan, the station's news director, "our viewers get better product."

Other partnerships have recently been formed between papers and stations that don't have the same parent:

- Reporters from *The Washington Post* provide on-camera business reports several times a day on NBC-owned WRC.

- *Orange County Register* reporters write stories for KCBS in Los Angeles, which,

in turn, refers to the print stories in the *Register*.

- *The Akron Beacon Journal* arranged for WEWS in Cleveland to broadcast live from its newsroom, often interviewing print reporters on their stories.

Print and television reporters get used to each other's needs in time, says Deb Halpern, assistant news director in Tampa. "But," she says, "we have not quite overcome some print reporters' feeling that TV reporters don't get into stories deeply enough."

And that, for media critic Ned Schnurman, president of The Press and the Public Project, is the rub. "I see some hope, if stations go to newspapers for content," Schnurman says. "But unless the managements are willing to give sufficient time on air for serious journalism, there won't be much depth, no matter how much input there is from a newspaper's reporting."

— John Wicklein

LOTS OF ACTION IN LOS ANGELES

Changes in ownership and leadership at the *Los Angeles Times* have been well reported, but things have been happening at some of the smaller journalistic organizations in the area too.

Los Angeles magazine has long been heavy on service features, sex, and light-hearted columns, but short on substance. Now, with a new owner (Emmis Communications, which also owns *Texas Monthly*) it's being reborn as a more literary, nonfiction magazine with a more expansive view of the city. And its new editor, Kit Rachlis (a former editor at the *L.A. Weekly*, *The Village Voice*, and the *Los Angeles Times*) says he's aim-

ing for sophisticated, perceptive, lively writing about Los Angeles culture and lifestyles that will make the magazine a must-read.

At the L.A. bureau of NPR, plans are afoot for a fifty- to one-hundred-person production facility to open early next year, aimed at expanding news and arts coverage of the West Coast. And public station KCRW has a new program being distributed by Public Radio International called *To the Point*, a fast-paced, daily public affairs show about national and international affairs — not the sort of broadcasting Los Angeles is usually known for.

New Times, which entered the market several years ago,

has recently done some important journalism — despite the often shrill tone of its columnists. The other alternative paper, the tired *L.A. Weekly*, is bringing in a new editor.

To supply quality journalists for this new age, Los Angeles may have to overcome its curious difficulty in developing its own newspeople. The University of Southern California journalism school (whose accreditation was put into question in 1999) has been moving quickly to launch a slew of new programs — most notably, one that will send about 70 percent of the graduate students abroad this summer to produce stories under USC faculty tutelage. They'll return, the school expects, with new in-

sights about how to cover one of the nation's most multicultural regions.

That richness and variety of its culture, along with power shortages and the state's high-technology industries, have made Los Angeles "a focus for all the major issues of the twenty-first century," says Warren Olney, a program host on KCRW.

— Neal Koch



PREVIEW: HIGH SCHOOL JOURNALISM — 'WE'RE TRYING TO INSPIRE FOLKS TO BELIEVE AGAIN'

Plagued in recent years by censorship, budget crunches, and embattled or inexperienced advisers, high school journalism is getting some much-needed attention from an array of major industry organizations.

Example: The American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE) and the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation have launched an ambitious program to revitalize high school journalism, particularly in urban areas. Why? High school is considered by many to be the best place to generate interest in journalism as a career, especially for minorities, and to turn students into lifelong newspaper readers.

Knight awarded ASNE a \$500,000 planning grant for three new high school initiatives:

- The ASNE High School Journalism Institute for teachers. Starting this sum-

mer, about 200 journalism teachers will participate in two-week, for-credit workshops at six universities around the country.

- The ASNE Journalism Partnerships, in which newspapers team with local schools to help them start student newspapers or improve existing newspapers. This year, \$117,500 went to thirty-one schools and twenty-seven daily newspapers; another twenty-five partnerships will get funding this summer.

- A new Web site at www.highschooljournalism.org provides exercises, sample lesson plans, updates on scholastic press freedoms, and links to journalism schools, scholarships, and awards.

The Knight Foundation is likely to grant ASNE an additional \$4.8 million to expand these programs for 2001-2003. In a separate but related program, Knight last year awarded

a three-year, \$825,000 grant to expand Harvard University's Program on The Media and American Democracy to five additional universities. The six-day summer workshop helps high school instructors teach the media's role in a democracy.

High school journalism is getting serious attention from other groups as well. The Newspaper Association of America (NAA) this year will release the Pipeline Project, a study looking at the role high school journalism plays in encouraging young people to seek newspaper careers. The spring issue of *Nieman Reports* contains a section on youth journalism. And *Quill and Scroll* is seeking funding to mail its updated *Principal's Guide to High School Journalism* booklet to every public and private secondary school administrator in the country.

Educators and industry experts are concerned because

one-fifth of all U.S. high schools do not have student newspapers, according to a national survey by Jack Dvorak, a journalism professor at Indiana University in Bloomington. He also found that students of color account for just 15.5 percent of high school media staffs. And about 30 percent of high school journalism advisers have been on the job for three years or less, and may not have much journalism training.

"We're trying to inspire folks to believe again that this is a noble and useful profession," says Hodding Carter III, president and chief executive officer of the Knight Foundation. "Whether or not they actually go into journalism, we want to touch as many students as possible with the kind of training and experience that will sharpen their appreciation for the First Amendment."

— Laura Castañeda

LANGUAGE CORNER

IT ALL DEPENDS ON 'U'

"Stanch" is a verb meaning to block the flow of something — anything from blood to a company's losses to emigration. It's also possible to stanch the thing causing the flow — a wound, for example.

"Staunch" — note the "u" — is an adjective meaning watertight (a staunch ship) or more broadly, strong, loyal, dedicated, steadfast (it's popular as a neutral substitute for "zealous").

The words have the same root, and the spelling question used to be considered a toss-up. But the modern consensus is that never the twain should meet, as they did here:

"Finally, Congress has already allocated \$1.3 billion to staunch the flow of drugs . . ." Adding that "u" to the verb is the standard error. Make it "stanch."

"Gantlet" (no "u") is an ordeal, originally military

punishment requiring the offender to run between two lines of fellow warriors who beat him with switches, clubs, or other handy toys.

"Gauntlet" (with a "u" and a different root) is a large glove, originally one that protected a combatant's hand and forearm. Throwing down a gauntlet issued a challenge; taking one up accepted the defy, and both phrases are still used figuratively. So, consider:

"Congress had in fact already erected by statute an intimidating gauntlet of studies, findings, public hearings, and other steps the DOD would need to take before closing a base." Congress erected an intimidating glove? Drop the "u"; that's a "gantlet."

— Evan Jenkins

A lot more about writing right is in Language Corner at CJR's Web site, www.cjr.org.

ROLE MODELS

ROBERT TROUT

Under the title ROLE MODELS, CJR asks accomplished journalists to write about the people who inspired them. Here Tom Nagorski, foreign editor for ABC's World News Tonight, remembers a brief but instructive moment with Robert Trout, whose path he crossed ten years ago.

BY TOM NAGORSKI

When word came in November that the great broadcast journalist Robert Trout had died — in his sleep, in a Manhattan hospital — colleagues in the newsroom and obituary writers remembered the D-Day landings, Alan Shepard's space flight, and some of the seventeen presidential campaigns Trout covered, all the way back to FDR's whistlestop tour in 1932. I had less lofty recollections. Nothing for the vaults at the Museum of Radio & Television.

In March 1990, I was twenty-seven, an ABC News producer in Berlin covering the first and last democratic elections in the former East Germany. On the Monday after the vote I had a call from one of our London editors: Go to Brussels, she ordered. "The nuns story."

The "nuns story," as it turned out, was about eight Belgian nuns ranging in age from sixty-two to ninety-three who had sold their convent in the medieval city of Bruges. They had pocketed the proceeds, bought a chateau in the south of France, and fled in the middle of the night in a convoy of Mercedes. The convent was more than six hundred years old, and it was not at all clear that the nuns — from the order of The Poor Sisters of Clare — had any business selling the convent buildings. The Bishop of Bruges was furious.

The London tabloids were feasting on the story. NUNS IN PARADISE, cheered the *Daily Star*. From *The Daily Mirror*: "Eight naughty nuns who flogged off their convent for nearly one million pounds were settling into a life of luxury today. They made themselves at home in a grand French chateau, with swimming pool and tennis courts..."

Our London editors found all this irresistible. They sent me with a crew to Bruges to look into what had happened. Then they dispatched Trout — eighty-

one but still taking the occasional ABC assignment — to Provence, to trail the nuns. A few days later we met in a London edit room. He and his crew had managed brief interviews and some shots of the chateau's grounds before they were shooed away. "We never intended any harm," a Sister Josephine had said softly to Trout, in French. The bishop, she explained, had been obdurate, even abusive. "So with only a few of us, all quite old, we came here, looking for a more peaceful life." Trout had also discovered "discrepancies," as he put it, between the tabloid accounts and the scene in Provence. The chateau's "Olympic swimming pool" was actually a dry, cracked-concrete pit. Nor would anyone have known, from the pictures, that the weedy plot off the front lawn had ever been a tennis court. "Not my kind of chateau!" bubbled Trout.

I was discussing "Nuns On The Run" with the greatest living figure in American broadcast journalism. Trout had been the eminence grise at CBS News when I was a child. A generation earlier, he had given voice lessons to the great Edward R. Murrow. It was Trout who coined the term "fireside chats," to describe FDR's radio broadcasts to the nation; Trout who first broadcast live reports from a presidential campaign, in 1936; Trout who brought London bombings and the D-Day landings at Normandy into America's living rooms. Between World War II and the end of the cold war, few great moments in the nation's history passed without intelligent on-air commentary from Robert Trout.

Now he and I were chatting about itinerant nuns. He was thin, hunched slightly, dressed in a beige tweed suit and maroon vest. He treated me as he might a longtime colleague. "Think I should start this way," he asked, "with the pictures from France?"

"That ought to be fine," I said.

We worked on the piece until dinner. He may have been eighty-one years old, but Trout was still working to get the nuances just right, still clearly enjoying the quirks of the story and the business in general.

He wanted to sidestep any details about precisely how the nuns had arranged their flight. "Don't feel we really know enough — or that people will



Trout on the job in 1956

care enough, frankly — about every fact in this case," he said. Instead he wrote,

In the quiet Belgian city of Bruges, nuns from the order of the Poor Sisters of Clare had lived and prayed, without incident, for six hundred years. But suddenly, eight of the Poor Sisters have created an incident. They're rich!

In a paragraph delivered deadpan, facing the camera in southern France, Trout said:

And this is what they bought: a handsome chateau that needs work. Lots of work. And lots of money. Maybe all the money they have left. But this is where they want their adventure to end. In the sunshine. [Here Trout peered up at a cloudy sky]. When there is some...

When he finished tapping out the story on a borrowed laptop ("not sure I'd have gotten anywhere," he muttered, "with gadgets like these"), I helped him print it out, and while we waited for word from the editors at *World News Tonight*, Trout asked what had brought me overseas. I gave him a few answers, and he nodded.

"Well you've certainly come at an interesting time," he said. "You'll have yourself some marvelous experiences, I imagine."

After a quiet minute or so he began to laugh. "I'll bet you didn't think you'd be covering the story of the Missing Nuns!"

And then Trout lost himself in a wonderful gathering laugh. "The Runaway Sisters of Clare!" he cried. "Oh, my goodness. Now there's a story to cut your teeth on!" ■

PHOTOGRAPH BY [illegible]

DARTS & . . .

MISSING . . .

✦ The *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* on October 25 carried a signed column by Susan Laccetti Meyers about a proposed commuter rail between Athens and Atlanta, in which she bolstered her case against the rail with the concerns of residents in the area who worry about the project's effect on property values. But neither that particular column, nor the several unsigned editorials she wrote earlier on the subject, mentioned that Meyers herself is a resident of the area. (Compounding the compromise of Meyers's credibility was her insistence that she no longer lived there, notwithstanding evidence to the contrary unearthed by the alternative weekly *Creative Loafing*. That evidence included current phone listings, city tax records, and Mr. Meyers's statement that his wife would "be back" when a reporter went to the house and rang the bell.)

✦ The Bucks County, Pennsylvania, *Courier Times* devoted some forty-eight column-inches on the front page of its July 25 Money section to a report on the complaints of local auto-repair shop owners about what they regard as excessive charges for the phone calls required to verify the data in emission control inspections. Written under the byline of reporter George Mattar, the story was illustrated by a seven-by-eight-inch photo of one Bob Frick, owner of Wrightstown Auto Repair, whom Mattar quoted as saying that the phone charges were a "rip-off" and that the emissions tests themselves didn't "make any sense." One fact the story didn't emit: that reporter Mattar has a part-time job at Frick's auto repair shop.

✦ The *Providence Journal* on October 16 featured as the lead story in its second section a sunny "Special to the Journal" report on a recent statewide Boy Scouts Camporee written under the byline of Stephen Kostrzewa, who was identified as "a former assistant senior patrol leader for Troop 6, Cranston." The I.D. neglected to mention that Stephen is the seventeen-year-old son of John Kostrzewa, the *Journal's* chief business editor. (The *Pro-Jo* newsroom wasn't filled with happy campers. "It makes me think about moving on," grumbled one veteran reporter to the *Providence Guild Leader*, "because I want to write for a quality newspaper and I don't want my byline appearing next to stories of that caliber.")

✦ The Lowell, Massachusetts, *Sun* strongly supported in its columns and editorials, as well as in public hearings, a special bill, signed in August by the governor, that allowed the state to demolish a local public housing project and, rather than replacing it with new public housing as required by law, put in a privately built development for mixed-income families. But what the *Sun* failed to tell both readers and legislators was that editorial-page editor Alexander S. Costello, together with his brother Andrew, owned nearly three acres of land adjacent to the project site and stood to gain a significant profit if the deal went through.

EYES ON THE PRIZE

✦ "Follow the money," experience shows, and you may find yourself in the running for a Pulitzer Prize. At *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, however, that famous journalistic imperative has taken on entirely new meaning. There, if you choose your sources carefully enough, if you squeeze your contacts hard enough, if you put in time and effort enough, you might sell enough subscriptions to find yourself in the running for a paid-up trip to Paris (or possibly a gift certificate to Morton's of Chicago). Of course, as publisher Bob Hall wrote in a January 19 memo ("Importance: High"), "the more successful you are in obtaining new sub-

scribers, the more chances you have to win prizes or earn cash." What's more, the first order of business is to make "new subscribers" of the staffers themselves ("The percentage of our employees who are active home-delivery subscribers is much lower than what it should be . . . I believe each of us should have a subscription . . . A subscription from each employee is important . . ."). Hall also suggested that *Inky* staffers "consider organizing a subscription sale for the benefit" of schools and community groups. He did not say whether they should pursue those important new subscriptions before or after they pursue the news.


UNDER THE INFLUENCE

✦ "Mortified" — that's the way one reporter at *The San Juan Star* described to CJR the reaction of the news staff when they got a gander at a finished copy of the December 1 edition. "Absolut-ly mortified" would have been more apt still. It seems that while the newsroom had gone about its business of putting out the paper in the habitual way (including sober page-one stories about national and local politics, business, and sports), a four-page, four-color supplement, featuring another front page, had been printed at a different shop and wrapped around the *Star*. Duplicating the tabloid's familiar logo, typeface, and layout, the new front page — headlined ABSOLUT SIGHTING OFF THE COAST OF PUERTO RICO — breathlessly revealed that, among other things, a "series of sightings," purportedly captured in the eight-by-ten photo of an orange afloat in an azure sky, had left the "market intrigued," caused crowds to "gather in expectation to observe the phenomenon," and "prompted the Governor to activate the National Guard." If the *Star* had been in any way tempted to reveal to readers, in even the smallest agate type, that its front page was an ad for Absolut's orange-flavored vodka, it managed to abstain.

The Darts & Laurels column is written by Gloria Cooper, CJR's managing editor, to whom nominations should be addressed.


... LAURELS

PENAL MALPRACTICE



When a female inmate at Wisconsin's Taycheedah Correctional Institution died last February gasping for air on the dining room floor in an acute attack of asthma that prison nurses ignored, the question arose whether the negligence was an isolated incident or part of a hidden pattern. Eight months later — after a review of thousands of pages of police, coroner, and Department of Corrections records on fourteen facilities in eleven Wisconsin counties; after an examination of virtually every inmate death since 1994; and after interviews with corrections officials, medical workers, lawyers, inmates, and inmates' families — the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* had the answer. Its three-part series by staff reporters Mary Zahn and Jessica McBride (October 22-24) documented case after case of dubious decisions made by questionable personnel while gravely ill inmates, in the throes of heart attack or appendicitis, asthma or internal bleeding, kidney disease or lung cancer, pleaded futilely for help. While noting the inadequacies in staffing, training, and communication that have conspired to endanger inmates, the series was unrestrained in criticizing both the shoddiness and the secrecy of official inquiries into such deaths. By October 25, Zahn and McBride were reporting on the many remedies being proposed by outraged lawmakers, in evident agreement with the paper's editorial conclusion: "Wisconsin is a state without a death penalty in fact; it shouldn't have one in practice."


FIVE-ALARM NEWS



Untrained firefighters, undermanned crews, broken-down trucks, nonworking aerial ladders, malfunctioning pumper engines, shut-off hydrants, closed-up stations — such were the frightening findings of a nine-month *Detroit News* inquiry into how well the city's fire department protects the residents it serves. The headline over the paper's November series — OUT OF SERVICE — was hardly overheated. Hampered by the department's policy of secrecy, reporters Melvin Claxton and Charles Hurt managed nonetheless to visit all of Detroit's seven-one fire companies, ana-

lyze thousands of pages of records, interview some 300 firefighters as well as dozens of federal and state officials — and establish, in their four-part exposé, links between the department's deadly shortcomings and twenty-one deaths in the past four years. While the series instantly ignited pledges of major reform, follow-up stories well into January showed that the link between fatal fires and fire-department failings continued unabated. And that within the department, irresponsibility — withholding damaging documents, threatening punishment to whistleblowers — raged out of control.

ALTERNATIVE POWER



Talk about steady coverage! For more than thirty years, the *San Francisco Bay Guardian* has kept an unwavering beam on Pacific Gas & Electric, exposing the plagues visited on the public by the programs and policies of the monopoly that provides most of the city's power. Now, as the Bay Area stumbles around in rolling

blackouts while contemplating ever higher utility bills, Bruce Brugmann's alternative weekly is more energetic than ever, illuminating the (misguided) arguments of those who endorse a publicly funded bailout of the (questionably) near-bankrupt utility and activists pushing for a community-based, publicly run, nonprofit system. However this crisis turns out, *SFBG* readers can rest assured that they'll never be left in the dark.

MONEY TALKS



It isn't every day that one public-affairs program on a national network casts a skeptical eye on the ethics of another public-affairs program on the very same network. But that's precisely what Terence Smith, media correspondent for PBS's *NewsHour with Jim Lehrer*, did on December 27 when he took on television's financial-advice shows. Picking up on SEC chairman Arthur Levitt's recently launched campaign to develop standards for disclosing conflicts of interest by analysts who make stock recommendations in print or on TV, Smith highlighted a particular kind of conflict that goes commonly unnoted — namely, touting stock in a corporation that does business with the analyst's own firm. Such a relationship, Levitt explained, can be corrupting because in soliciting a corporation's banking business the investment firm will often promise to get it more publicity. Gathering examples from CNNfn, CNBC, and PBS, Smith presented as his primary case in point Louis Rukeyser's *Wall Street Week* — the thirty-year-old show that bills itself as "America's most widely watched and trusted source of economic and financial advice." One clip showed Rukeyser talking with a Goldman Sachs analyst pushing IBM — without mentioning that the banking firm had handled a public offering for IBM; another showed him talking with a Bear Stearns analyst pushing Park Place Entertainment — again, without mentioning the financial relationship between the two. The emerging picture of *WSW* was not a pretty one; and in comparison with the disclosure policies of similar programs, it got less pretty still. "*Wall Street Week's* executive producer, Rich Dubroff, declined to be interviewed on camera," Smith reported, "but said this over the phone: 'It should be the responsibility of the firms and the SEC if they think they should make these relationships known. The viewers should research all their investment decisions very carefully, and if they make those decisions carefully, they will make them on the merits of the investment.' The host, Louis Rukeyser, declined repeated requests to discuss the issue."

Hanging with the Chads

Our Man at the Great Florida Recount



Amy Driscoll of *The Miami Herald* takes a hard look at a questionable ballot

BY RUSS BAKER

Do the media really need much justification for examining — at this late date — the ballots that were cast but not counted during the achingly close 2000 presidential contest in all-important Florida? The post-mortem obviously won't affect the outcome. Yet with confidence in the electoral system undermined at home and America's reputation as a paragon of democratic voting damaged abroad, an honest accounting of the public's will may be the right medicine. And no price for starting our national therapy seems too high.

Actually, the price can start surprisingly low, as I found out during a visit to Florida in early February. For under five bucks per hour, for example, I could have purchased from Hillsborough County (Tampa and vicinity) the right to sit at a table and watch as county employees held one ballot after another over a light box, and scrutinized dimpled, hanging, and virginal chads to my heart's content. Instead, being a nonpaying observer, I was

made to peer from behind a floor-to-ceiling glass partition as an electoral autopsy, with all the visual appeal of a TV test pattern, unfolded.

Yet exciting or not, something historic was taking place. Ever since December, when the Supreme Court halted a pending recount and gave George W. Bush a 537-vote Florida margin and the presidency, news operations have been fanning out across Florida to examine the record. It's hard to recall when the media have championed the public's right to know with quite this mix of breadth and consequence.

The ballot recount has prompted patient curiosity from the public and understandable wariness from the GOP. Republican operatives, in fact, were riding shotgun on the media recount efforts all across the state. As Governor Jeb Bush told the *Orlando Sentinel*: "There's been a declared victor . . . The election's over. So go ahead and do it, but is that going to rewrite history? I don't think so. Should it rewrite history? No. We're a nation of laws, and the rule of law prevails."

DEFENDING THE EFFORT

Participants are quick to defend the operation. "Journalists have done this since the beginning of time," said Bill Rose, deputy managing editor at *The Palm Beach Post*, an early vote-count participant. "There's a story, it breaks, there are lots of questions. Do you take people's word, or do you examine the documents? There's no doubt the election is over. There's no doubt George Bush won the election in the minds of the people who determine that. But there are doubts in the minds of voters."

The Republicans probably need not worry. If the current exercise reeks of anything, it is the perfumed air of propriety and moderation. None of the various ballot inspection operations will dare to pronounce a "real" winner in Florida. Even if it looks abundantly clear that Al Gore received more votes than George Bush, these news outfits will not be making such a conclusive statement. Instead, the idea is to create — for the public, for posterity, for those interested in reforming voting system accuracy, for academics and specialists — a permanent record of what happened in the polling booths. The participants don't call this a "recount," but the building of a database, an effort to "describe" each uncounted ballot as precisely as possible, categorizing them by such factors as overvote or undervote, one-corner-detached chad or dimpled chad with light coming through. Once the totals for each category are in, they say, people can draw their own conclusions. They can, if they wish, take into account the relative merits and liabilities of different types of punch card machines with names like Accu-Vote, Votomatic, and Data-Punch, and of various optical scanning technologies, and ponder the efficacy of Martin County's old-fashioned lever-pull balloting and Union County's good old manually counted paper ballots.

DUELING INSPECTIONS

Some might call this a futile exercise, but the venture nonetheless made enough sense to media organizations that more than a dozen of them, in concert or individually, opted in. Luckily for this purpose, the election debacle unfolded in the Sunshine State, which has one of the country's most liberal sunshine laws, enacted in 1967 and inscribed in the Constitution in 1992 after a Florida Supreme Court decision threatened the law.

The first organizations into the water were, not surprisingly, Florida-based. In November, within days of the election, *The Miami Herald* began making public-records requests for access to all "under-vote" ballots throughout the state — ballots that were recorded as showing no choice in the presidential race. *The Palm Beach Post*, meanwhile, launched its own limited effort in nearby counties. The Tribune Company paper, the *Orlando Sentinel*, undertook its own selective forays. (In addition, the conservative group Judicial Watch began a statewide examination.) The state was a patchwork of media legal challenges, with *Herald* attorneys, in particular, bouncing from Sarasota to Dixie to Duval counties, seeking injunctive relief to force reluctant county officials to comply with their request.

The *Sentinel* quickly published its first findings on differences in optical scans, on December 19, seven days after the U.S. Supreme Court halted all recounts. Although twenty-six counties scan ballots right at polling stations and allow voters to immediately correct any errors, fifteen others send the ballots to a central county office where they are tabulated later, preventing voter adjustment of unintended selections. In little Lake County, west of Orlando, the *Sentinel* found that more than 600 ballots had been disqualified not because of ambivalence but over-enthusiasm: voters had marked the appropriate oval for their presidential choice and registered a second preference for the same person as a write-in. The scanners, unable to distinguish between two votes for competing candidates and double votes for the same candidate, negated the ballots. Conclusion: if the double-entry ballots were counted, in Lake County Gore would have gained 130 votes. In all, the *Sentinel* found what it calls a "possible" net gain for Gore of 366 votes in fifteen small counties, plus 203 in its Orange County, and an additional thirteen in Seminole. Sean Holton,

special projects editor, emphasizes that these are "probable," not definite. Still, by my math, that is 582 probable votes, enough to turn the election.

When *The Palm Beach Post* jumped into the ballot-examination business it started not close to home — despite Palm Beach County's globally televised ballot quandaries — but instead rushed two counties south to Miami-Dade, snatching a story from under the *Herald's* nose. Fifteen days after the election, Miami-Dade had halted its recount — from which the Gore campaign had expected to pick up as many as 600 votes — when canvassing board members were besieged by a noisy demonstration of GOP staffers flown in from Washington. "We decided, heck, we gotta know what happened there," said Bill Rose. *Post* reporters watched as Miami-Dade workers flipped through more than 10,000 ballots that had been rejected by machines. The *Post's* story,

'GO AHEAD AND DO IT. BUT IS THAT GOING TO REWRITE HISTORY? I DON'T THINK SO.'

— Governor Jeb Bush

which ran January 14, reported the astonishing conclusion that a full Miami-Dade count would have shifted by just six votes — and to Bush, not Gore. And that was with a generous standard preferred by the Gore people, counting anything at all with the slightest indication of preference: partially detached chads, even simple dimpled chads. Two weeks later, *The Post* ran a story about its own county, where, applying the same standard, it found that Gore would have picked up 682 votes — enough to reverse the election outcome. Even so, Rose, like all the editors, was reluctant to characterize the findings, noting that many other factors, including whether to accept improperly postmarked or late absentee ballots, could have played a role. "This is an *If* story," he said. "It explains why the Democrats argued so vociferously to count dimpled ballots."

ENTER THE DRAGON

It wasn't long before leading non-Florida news organizations decided to jump in. Representatives of *The Washington Post/Newsweek*, *The New York Times*, *The*

Wall Street Journal, CNN, The Associated Press and other organizations soon joined forces, agreeing during a series of conference calls and meetings to finance an examination with the heft and scientific rigor one might expect from such outfits. After initially sitting in on counting sessions where the *Herald* was also present, the consortium went its own way. It hired a well-respected not-for-profit organization, the University of Chicago-affiliated National Opinion Research Center (NORC.) The consortium came to include news organizations that had already conducted ballot inspections, including Cox's *Palm Beach Post*, the *St. Petersburg Times*, and the Tribune Company's *South Florida Sun-Sentinel* and *Orlando Sentinel* (Tribune's *Los Angeles Times* and *Chicago Tribune* would also join).

The 900-pound gorilla of Florida journalism, *The Miami Herald*, also participated in initial discussions with the consortium, but opted not to join. The *Herald*, with resources from its parent company, Knight Ridder, had already been moving forward by the time the consortium held its first formal conference call. The *Herald* had rushed to make public-records requests in all counties (an action that would benefit the consortium as well). To handle the ballot inspections, the *Herald* initially approached the Big Five accounting firms — and was uniformly rejected for what the bean-counters deemed an unnecessarily "controversial" activity. A second-tier but still sizable accounting firm, BDO Seidman, did agree to take on the job.

Tongues soon started clucking about why the *Herald* had declined to join up with the others, an act that would have created unanimity and hence added credibility to the consortium effort. But the *Herald* was dedicated to controlling its own project, and it wasn't about to share information with its main competitor. The *Herald* told consortium members that it would not participate if the *Sun-Sentinel*, an aggressive turf challenger based in neighboring Broward county, was included.

"We're highly competitive with them," explains the *Herald's* executive editor, Martin Baron. "The consortium came to us and asked us what are the terms under which there could be a partnership. We gave them an honest response: We didn't feel we could be partners with everyone in the consortium." (The *Herald* was ultimately joined in its survey by *USA Today*.)

KAUS AGONISTES

Soon, though, the *Herald* faced more criticism. In January, *Slate* published "The Miami Herald Blows Its Pulitzer." Writer Mickey Kaus chided the paper for not counting overvotes, declaring "any recount that doesn't include the overvotes is an incomplete recount." Kaus had pointed out that although the *Herald's* count will certainly address the "real world" recount scenario, it won't answer the important question of who really won the election. Kaus quoted *The Wall Street Journal's* Washington bureau chief, Alan Murray, suggesting that the *Herald* took the "cheap" way out in counting only the approximately 60,000 undervotes rather than all of Florida's 180,000 disputed ballots, including overvotes. The Miami paper, the argument went, was more interested in a scoop than in getting the whole story.

This infuriated Baron, who said the *Herald's* point was to simulate the original, court-mandated recounts (they revolved around undervotes only, which is all that Team Gore had asked for) and not to predict what might have happened had overvotes been included. And he saw a deeper problem with the criticism: "Since when do people in the media think there should be only one source of information? It's almost unprecedented. I'm not aware of another example where media organizations think it's inappropriate for media organizations to embark on their own projects." Baron argued that the *Herald*, which won a Pulitzer in 1999 for investigating vote fraud in Miami, was once again out front, publishing a raft of investigative pieces on everything from poor-quality voting machines to evidence that more than 2,000 Floridians voted illegally in November's election.

Still, the *Herald* found it increasingly necessary to consider the overvote, and, three days after telling CJR that the paper was considering "looking" at those ballots, it ran its own "analysis" on overvotes, supported by a study by a professor from the University of California. The professor found that "as many as 1,700" voters in Miami-Dade invalidated their presidential ballots because they mistakenly punched the chad below the one corresponding to their preferred candidate.

By February, when I visited the first formal day of the consortium's recount, the *Herald* was far ahead, having already

polished off most of the state's undervote. The consortium, though rushing late out of the gates and examining a far larger number of ballots, came with superior financial resources and numerical strength, as well as NORC's vaunted technical expertise.

While the *Herald's* work involved one accountant and one reporter in each county, NORC would have multiple teams at a site, each consisting of three tabulators, or "coders," plus a supervisor. Dan Keating, *The Washington Post's* database editor, said that having three people look at the ballots gives the review more statistical validity. "We wanted to create the definitive data source," he said. Requiring more than one person to examine each ballot will also help il-

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— Herald reporter Phil Long

luminate the degree of subjectivity involved in manual recounts, Keating notes. "The people at NORC are excited because they will do their own analysis on inter-coder reliability, to see whether two people looking at the same thing see the same thing."

But they were very privately excited. When CJR asked Kirk Wolter, NORC's senior vice president of statistics and methodology, where the consortium planned to be conducting ballot examinations in coming days so that the magazine might drop by, he declined to say. *The Washington Post's* Keating, similarly echoing concerns of "a media circus," noted that CJR couldn't be prevented from canvassing the individual counties to learn where the consortium might be appearing next (a daunting task, given Florida's sixty-seven counties) before grudgingly letting slip one location — Hillsborough County — out of six where NORC would be working that day.

When I arrived at the Hillsborough elections center, in an industrial park surrounded by farmland, the NORC officials did not seem particularly glad to see me, even though the feared media circus turned out to be one man with a pad. From my notes: NORC deployed four teams to examine the punch-card ballots, which had ballot

position numbers but no candidate names. The teams assigned codes in categories according to evidence of voter intent (as shown in the box on the facing page.)

NORC'S shyness was more understandable later, when, after reading NORC's press release about "producing the definitive archive of the disputed ballots" and hearing them characterize their teams as highly skilled and trained operatives, I learned that many of their coders were bored-looking locals hired through a temp agency. Although the *Sun-Sentinel's* Ward had described the methodologies as "mind-boggling," and "quite complete," what I saw amounted to something less than that. I was not permitted into the room where the ballot examination took place, observing it instead from several feet away behind glass, but I could see that although the examiners appeared serious and attentive, they seemed prone to the kinds of mistakes we had come to expect from the original recounts. Several were elderly, and one in particular seemed to have problems with her vision, standing up from her chair each time to lean in for a proper look at the ballots.

In Pinellas County, meanwhile, one of the NORC coders was not up to counting speed. Tina Harris, a GOP volunteer, claims the coder showed up late, reeked of drink, and had trouble functioning. Julie Antelman, a spokesperson for NORC, says she tracked down this GOP report and found that the coder "was not intoxicated." She does say that he was let go "because his job performance was not up to the standard." CJR spoke with four people who worked near the coder, including two county officials. None noticed evidence of drink. One coder said GOP operatives tried to get her to say otherwise.

Rounding out the imperfection of the process, I learned from Hillsborough County staffers (and a GOP observer) that two different NORC teams had accidentally examined the same precinct — counter to the NORC methodology.

Notwithstanding all this, NORC will end up with three opinions of every single ballot. Presumably, in the vast majority of cases, at least two of these will agree, and will be a fairly good reflection of what the ballot actually looked like. Each consortium member will then produce its own stories from the data.

HARK THE HERALD

The next day, in Brevard County, on Florida's Atlantic coast not far from Cape Canaveral, I attended a *Herald* count. Here, the atmosphere felt more convivial and relaxed — but no less rigorous. Michael Galy, a gray-haired CPA from BDO Seidman's Miami office, sat next to a *Herald* reporter, Phil Long. Four Brevard elections officials, all quite veteran and including Fred P. Galey, the supervisor of elections, sat through the count. While Two GOP observers watched from a distance, I stood directly behind the *Herald* people.

Long, a thirty-two-year *Herald* reporter, exhibited a preternaturally keen interest in every piece of paper, even taking frequent if brief opportunities to quiz county officials about what he saw on the optical scan ballots. He had good reason for caution: he didn't even know for certain whether the putative under-vote ballot he was examining had or had not been counted in the first place, since undervotes had not been separated from other ballots during the original election tabulation. At the *Herald's* request (and on the paper's dime), Brevard County clerks had had to examine 220,000 of them by hand, trying to find the 277 ballots that computer records showed had not registered a presidential choice. This was something of a guessing game. If county officials knew that a precinct showed six undervotes, they could do their best to find six ballots that appeared to be undervotes, but they would not be absolutely certain they had the right ones. Indeed, in some precincts, they came up one or two ballots short.

Beyond noting which candidate the voter had appeared to prefer, the *Herald* people were trying to figure out, by looking at the entire ballot, whether questionable or stray marks in the presidential section were part of a clearly intended vote. Their tabulation sheets offered the following choices: "No mark; Underlined candidate; Circled candidate; Circled Bubble; Marked X, Wrong pencil; Other." One column read: "Errors in other races: Mark Yes or No" and left room for additional comments.

Here's a typical couple of minutes looking at ballots where voters did not, as instructed, completely color in the oval "bubble" by their candidate of choice: a ballot surfaced with an "X" in the oval for BUSH. Then a ballot with a check mark in the oval for GORE. Then one where the voter had written in "H Beckman" —

perhaps the voter's own name. Next, a voter had circled the GORE oval. "Look, there again, the only error is in the presidential race," Long commented. "They've done it right in the rest of them." Another ballot had a write-in for "J Lennon." "Heh heh," said Long, making a quick notation. "All you need is love," deadpanned Galy, the accountant. Next ballot.

The *Herald's* effort, on the surface, might have seemed less "scientific" than the consortium's, with Long potentially polluting the process by talking with officials and interacting with the accountant. However, whenever he did so, he seemed only to increase the probability that he was describing the ballots with an understanding of how the county's machines actually work.

Ballots were categorized according to evidence of voter intent:

- Blank (no mark seen);
- Dimpled chad, no sunlight;
- Dimpled chad, sunlight;
- Dimple with or without sunlight, off chad, within borders;
- Dimple with or without sunlight, off chad, on border above;
- one detached corner;
- two detached corners;
- three detached corners;
- four detached corners.

After the day's counting was done, Long described himself as thrilled to be part of the effort, despite day after day of what seemed grueling and numbing work. "I've been involved with a lot of big stories," he said. "But this is an important one."

WHAT CAN WE CONCLUDE?

When the *Herald* announces its findings (probably in March) and the consortium completes its work and lifts its news embargo (most likely in April), the findings may chiefly excite aficionados: professors, probability freaks, C-SPAN buffs, party activists, all of whom may enjoy the gaming and number crunching from so

many different variables. But rather than ending the national discussion, the examination is likely to spur further debate. Determining who really "won" will not be possible without agreement over what constitutes a legitimate vote — something the counties themselves couldn't agree on, and on which the media aren't likely to take a firm, unified position.

The exception will be if the least controversial ballot description categories (such as chads with three corners detached) produce a decisive shift to Gore.

Citing human fallibility, the *Herald's* Baron predicts differences between his paper's counts and that of the consortium even when comparing undervotes in the same county. "The notion that any one review is the definitive review doesn't make any sense," he said, warning of the risks inherent in relying on a single source — as happened to the networks on election night.

In truth, the more journalists who can examine the business of voting, the better for everyone. Perhaps the most useful thing to come out of this historic media effort will not be numbers but technical observations that might prove useful as the country goes about trying to reform the way it records votes. Personally, I learned lots of things that hadn't been clear from the wave of coverage right after the election. Like how, GOP protestations to the contrary, few absentee punch card ballots had actually been altered with scotch tape or other means. And I got to play an interesting little game with Earnest Williams, the manager of the Hillsborough County Elections Service Center. After numerous unsuccessful attempts to simulate a dented but not punctured rectangle, I finally did it: created a pregnant chad. "Notice how hard you worked at that," said a grinning Williams.

Postscript: as CJR went to press, the *Herald* printed a scoop that put Gore's strategy in doubt. Based on undervotes in Miami-Dade, Volusia, Palm Beach, and Broward counties — the only places Gore had contested — the former vice president would still have lost. The *Herald* — by choosing not to wait for its compete statewide results, and by headlining the kind of definitive judgment that it had seemed to want to avoid — could claim a competitive victory. Still, that left the consortium with the bigger job (and perhaps the bigger story): deciphering the will of the people. ■

Russ Baker is a contributing editor to CJR.



NEW YORK

Ten Thousand Journalists To

PULLOUT

Manhattan Media Map/"The Shapers"

The six-page pull-out section beginning on the following page is for you to refer to or throw darts at. The Manhattan Media Map shows the locations of most major news organizations and publishers. "The Shapers" is a list of 200 New Yorkers, selected by CJR, who help shape the national media agenda. We hope these features give you some insight into the architecture and dimensions of the New York media. Some familiar *New York Times* names, like Maureen Dowd, Tony Lewis, and William Safire, are not on the "Shapers" list because it includes only people who work in New York. People associated with Columbia are also excluded. So you won't see James Stewart, Floyd Abrams, or Al Gore. We know there will be some disagreement with and criticism of "The Shapers." But, well, it's a list. To comment on this or any part of the cover package, e-mail the editors: cjr@columbia.edu.

MAP/INGO FAST

If geography is destiny, then the epicenter for the media is Manhattan. This is the media capital of the world, home to leading newspapers, major magazines, news services, most television networks, large book publishers, and Internet providers.

This has been true for a long time, but even in the age of information fragmentation, New York remains the place to be for many. AOL thinks so; it is building a new headquarters at Columbus Circle. *The New York Times* has unveiled a new skyscraper design, and Bloomberg is looking for a new landmark home.

Take a look at the geography. Rockefeller Plaza, home of NBC, is the backdrop for Katie Couric on *Today*. Just across the plaza is The Associated Press. Nearby are Fox News, McGraw Hill/Business Week, and the Time Inc. magazine complex, in a line of sleek skyscrapers. A few blocks away, Times Square is aglow with electronic headlines: Dow Jones (although its *Wall Street Journal* headquarters is in the financial district), ABC, Reuters, and Bloomberg, all offer the latest news and financial information. ABC has its streetside studio there, while Condé Nast and its magazines have moved in, and Reuters is on its way. And *The New York Times* gave the neighborhood its name.



NEW YORK RULES

Together on a Tight Little Island

More than ten thousand journalists — reporters, writers, editors, producers, photo and graphics people, and authors — are based in Manhattan. This is an extraordinary concentration of media power. Proximity brings with it a supercharged competitive environment, but the concentration also grants a disproportionate influence. Because New York is the center, its media tend to look inward. When they do look at the rest of the world, they tend to filter the news agenda through the prism of New York. What does this do to America's news?

Many of the journalists here have little in common with those who occupy the executive suites or are the journalistic stars of the big media companies. Yet in New York, your competitors tend to share certain experiences and values. One small example: most journalists here read *The New York Times*, sometimes called the house organ of the media establishment, and that's not surprising. But an informal survey also shows that most of them also read the *New York Observer*, the highly opinionated weekly that is full of New York media gossip, which is rarely seen outside the city. They obviously read *The New Yorker*, but rarely the *Los Angeles Times* or the *Chicago Tri-*

bune or *The Dallas Morning News*, narrowing rather than widening their experience.

Because they are neighbors they share other experiences: they socialize with each other, share podiums at meetings or panels, go to restaurants and bars together, even go on trips together. And, yes, marry each other. It is indeed a tight little island.

It gets tighter. Many have more ties: educational background, economic status, social beliefs, and occasionally political ones. These characteristics have generated the term Media Elite, an oversimplified and not always accurate phrase. But the fact is that with ten thousand journalists in one place, those at the top of the heap by their authority or their ideas have unparalleled influence over the national media agenda.

It would be wrong to characterize the media elite as monolithic, particularly at a time when the Internet is sprouting new media organizations whose home geography is cyberspace. Nor should we overstate its influence. Nonetheless, New York's media still rule. Ten thousand journalists are loose in the city — the concentration of media power in New York is a reality. Geography is destiny.

A SPECIAL REPORT BEGINS ON THE FOLLOWING PAGE

PHOTO ILLUSTRATION/RICHARD SHEN

THE SHAPERS

NEW YORK MEDIA 200

MOGULS. THEY RUN THE COMPANIES. THEY HAVE THE POWER

FRANK BENNACK/final years of steady Hearst stewardship.
CATHIE BLACK/leadership and salesmanship boost Hearst.
MICHAEL BLOOMBERG/large ambitions, including news.
LOU BOCCARDI/steering AP to new role in digital age.
STEVE CASE/AOL on top in merger; sharing power for now.
ANDREW HEYWARD/faces on-air succession issues at CBS News.
PETER KANN/Dow Jones c.e.o. keeps eye on Journal.
ANDY LACK/top-ranked NBC News, MSNBC, CNBC in his domain.
GERALD LEVIN/he's a survivor but it's AOL's ship now.
RUPERT MURDOCH/global entrepreneur; Fox TV on the rise.

DONALD NEWHOUSE/billionaire oversees family papers.
S.I. NEWHOUSE/billionaire brother who runs Condé Nast.
RICHARD PARSONS/another chief in AOL-TW mix.
SUMNER REDSTONE/still in control at Viacom-CBS.
RICK SMITH/he is a solid, long-running Newsweek c.e.o.
HOWARD STRINGER/made deal with Sony, now living with it.
ARTHUR SULZBERGER JR./number one news organization; his NYT facing e-challenge and editorial succession.
DAVID WESTIN/every day at ABC brings a new adventure.
BOB WRIGHT/now in his 15th year as top-rated NBC c.e.o.
MORT ZUCKERMAN/it's his money and those are his opinions.

NEWSPAPERS. THE AGENDA SETTERS, STARTING WITH THE TIMES

STEVE ADLER/WSJ investigative editor, now deputy m.e.
XANA ANTUNES/new editor; but same old Post.
WAYNE BARRETT/Voice houses tough investigative reporter.
FELICITY BARRINGER and **ALEX KUZYNSKI**/bad news? Times duo will find it.
ROBERT BARTLEY/WSJ's conservative voice since 1972.
GERALD BOYD/seasoned executive; pioneering work on race.
SUSAN CHIRA/recasting the Times's Week in Review.
RICHARD COHEN/insightful Washington Post columnist in NY.
STANLEY CROUCH/unpredictable Daily News columnist.
DON FORST/keeps up with 20-somethings at Village Voice.
TOM FRIEDMAN/NYT eloquent foreign policy analyst.
MICHAEL GOODWIN/makes the Daily News run.

ON THE RISE

JOEL CHEATWOOD/CBS O&O news chief will do anything for ratings.
VICTOR GANZI/likely successor to Frank Bennack as Hearst c.e.o.
MEL KARMAZIN/ruthless cost-cutter; Redstone choice to head Viacom.
PETER OLSON and **DAN BREWSTER**/Bertelsmann's commanders in New York.
ROBERT PITTMAN/he'll be running AOL Time Warner day to day, no matter what the titles.

ALIX FREEDMAN/writers like her are what make the Journal a great paper.
NICHOLAS KRISTOF/strong writer; moves into NYT management role.
JOANNE LIPPMAN/launched the Weekend Journal, now a deputy m.e.
MICHAEL ORESKES/on the masthead but the new assignment is tough; Times TV.
HOWELL RAINES/the clear voice on Times editorial page, with a bright future.
SELENA ROBERTS/a different NYT perspective on sports.
ANDY ROSENTHAL/Times foreign editor could follow in father's footsteps.
JON WOLMAN/new executive editor at AP;

MICHAEL GOODWIN/makes the Daily News run.
BOB HERBERT/prominent NYT voice for disadvantaged.
DAN HERTZBERG/journal go-to guy; newsroom leader.
RICHARD JOHNSON/everybody reads Page Six.
PETER KAPLAN/knows his audience in irreverent Observer.
MICHIKO KAKUTANI/tough NYT critic; the queen of books.
BILL KELLER/number two in Times newsroom; what's next?
ED KOSNER/magazine techniques improve Daily News.

AMITY SHLAES/darling of free marketeers; now at FT.
MIKE SILVERMAN/AP m.e. sets agenda from general desk.
LIZ SMITH/still in place but the opposition is gaining.
PAUL STEIGER/steady, creative hand shapes the Journal.
PHILIP WEISS/perhaps the wildest of Observer gang.
JIM WILLSE/Star-Ledger; how good can it get?
MATT WINKLER/making Bloomberg a real news operation.

JON WOLMAN/new executive editor at AP; made Korea story work.
MICHAEL MILLER/WSJ front page editor; making a mark.

TELEVISION-RADIO: WHAT THEY SEE IS WHAT YOU GET

ROGER AILES/his Fox News Channel is changing cable news.
ROONE ARLEDGE/wisdom on high now, but ABC still listens.
MARIE BARTIROMO and **JIM KERNAN**/will Money Honey and Kahuna ride out the roller coaster at CNBC?
BRADLEY/ROONEY/STAHL/WALLACE/KROFT/the faces of 60 Minutes, and they just keep shining.
TOM BROKAW/NBC's top dog in ratings and around New York.
DICK EBERSOL/NBC's sports guru, but do we need the NFL?
JEFF GREENFIELD/CNN's political wise man.
DON HEWITT/still ticking at 60 Minutes.
DON IMUS/he'll sell your wares.
PETER JENNINGS/majestic millennium; a little ordinary now.
PAT KIERNAN/unique wake-up on NY One.
MATT LAUER and **KATIE COURIC**/best in the morning.
DAVID LETTERMAN/monologues are biting commentary.

RUSH LIMBAUGH/anti-New Yorker broadcasts from NY.
TIM MCCARVER/ex-baseball player with major league insights.
PHYLLIS MCGRADY/NBC secret weapon; enterprise specials.
LORNE MICHAELS/SNL's best presidential parody ever.
BILL MOYERS/nobody's better at serious television.
JANE PAULEY/the familiar face at Dateline NBC.
DAN RATHER/off the wall election night, but all journalist.
GERALDO RIVERA/still plugging despite ups and downs.
CHARLIE ROSE/knight of his own chat-filled roundtable.
DIANE SAWYER/helping ABC morning rebound.
DICK SCHAAP/perfected TV sports interview; now, a book.
NEAL SHAPIRO/the brains behind NBC's Dateline.
HOWARD STERN/do we have to? ... he's still going strong.
BARBARA WALTERS/it's the persistence and hard work, stupid.
BETSY WEST/60 Minutes II; her latest CBS success.

FRANCESCA AND RUSSO/no, it's not a restaurant; hot sports talk from WFAN.
SEAN MCMANUS/riding with Super Bowl; Tiger Woods as CBS sports guru.
JIM NANCE/CBS's best sports face; you'll see a lot of him this year.
BILL O'REILLY/lots of opinions for Fox, and a best-seller too.
BRIAN WILLIAMS/NBC's Prince of Wales to Brokaw's king.

MAGAZINES: MANHATTAN IS TRULY THEIR CAPITAL

WALTER ANDERSON/under the radar; Parade flourishes.
KEITH BLANCHARD/Maxim's sex formula keeps working.
MYRNA BLYTH/makes Meredith magazines work.
MARIE BRENNER/still takes on the big ones for Vanity Fair.
STEVE BRILL/Content is just one of many balls he has in air.
TINA BROWN/will she vanish into a Hollywood black hole?
KEVIN BUCKLEY/Playboy is just one of his triumphs.
BETSY CARTER/launched My Generation; facing age head-on.
GRAYDON CARTER/Vanity Fair, gossip but compelling writing.
JOHN MACK CARTER/still listened to at Hearst.
BILL COLSON/keeps Sports Illustrated rolling.
ART COOPER/old pro keeps GO competitive.

JOHN PAPANKE/ESPN-The Magazine; new ideas work.
NORMAN PEARLSTINE/what will be his role with AOL?
PICK SIX: NEW YORKER WRITERS/William Finnegan, Malcolm Gladwell, Adam Gopnik, Philip Gourevitch, Hendrik Hertzberg, Jeffrey Toobin.
ANNA QUINDLEN/column in Newsweek; books too.
JOSH QUITNER/Time technology guru and columnist.
STEVE REDDICLIFFE/don't underestimate power of TV Guide.
RICK REILLY and **GARY SMITH**/Si's top writers.
DAVID REMNICK/leads New Yorker renewal; writers' heaven.
CARLITO RODRIGUEZ/The Source; hip hop's top magazine.
ATOOSA RUBENSTEIN/CosmoGirl; spin-off a hit with teens.

KATE BETTS/her own person at Harper's Bazaar.
JOHN HUEY/in the age of money, he's restored Fortune; adds corporate duties.
JIM KELLY/the new m.e. of Time; filling big shoes.
RICH LOWRY/young conservative voice of National Review.
RUTH REICHL/she knows her beans and her Gourmet magazine shows it.
ALEXANDER STAR/a thirty-something whiz editor; Lingua Franca.
CYNDI STIVERS/founding editor Time Out NY; new model for city magazines.

BOB HERBERT/prominent NYT voice for disadvantaged.
DAN HERTZBERG/Journal go-to guy; newsroom leader.
RICHARD JOHNSON/everybody reads Page Six.
PETER KAPLAN/knows his audience in irreverent Observer.
MICHIKO KAKUTANI/tough NYT critic, the queen of books.
BILL KELLER/number two in Times newsroom; what's next?
ED KOSNER/magazine techniques improve Daily News.

TELEVISION-RADIO: WHAT THEY SEE IS WHAT YOU GET

ROGER AILES/his Fox News Channel is changing cable news.
ROONE ARLEDGE/wisdom on high now, but ABC still listens.
MARIE BARTIROMO AND JIM KERNAN/will Money Honey and Kahuna ride out the roller coaster at CNBC?
BRADLEY/ROONEY/STAHL/WALLACE/KROFT/the faces of 60 Minutes, and they just keep shining.
TOM BROKAW/NBC's top dog in ratings and around New York.
DICK EBERSOL/NBC's sports guru, but do we need the NFL?
JEFF GREENFIELD/CNN's political wise man.
DON HEWITT/still ticking at 60 Minutes.
DON IMUS/he'll sell your wares.
PETER JENNINGS/majestic millennium; a little ordinary now.
PAT KIERNAN/unique wake-up on NY One.
MATT LAUER AND KATIE COURIC/best in the morning.
DAVID LETTERMAN/monologues are biting commentary.

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WALTER ANDERSON/under the radar; Parade flourishes.
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JOHN MACK CARTER/still listened to at Hearst.

MIKE SILVERMAN/AP m.e. sets agenda from general desk.
LIZ SMITH/still in place but the opposition is gaining.
PAUL STEIGER/steady, creative hand shapes the Journal.
PHILIP WEISS/perhaps the wildest of Observer gang.
JIM WILLSE/Star-Ledger, how good can it get?
MATT WINKLER/making Bloomberg a real news operation.

RUSH LIMBAUGH/anti-New Yorker broadcasts from NY.
TIM MCCARVER/ex-baseball player with major league insights.
PHYLLIS MCGRADY/NBC secret weapon; enterprise specials.
LORNE MICHAELS/SNL's best presidential parody ever.
BILL MOYERS/nobody's better at serious television.
JANE PAULEY/the familiar face at Dateline NBC.
DAN RATHER/off the wall election night, but all journalist.
GERALDO RIVERA/still plugging despite ups and downs.
CHARLIE ROSE/knight of his own chat-filled roundtable.
DIANE SAWYER/helping ABC morning rebound.
DICK SCHAAP/perfected TV sports interview; now, a book.
NEAL SHAPIRO/the brains behind NBC's Dateline.
HOWARD STERN/do we have to? ... he's still going strong.
BARBARA WALTERS/It's the persistence and hard work, stupid.
BETSY WEST/60 Minutes II; her latest CBS success.

JOHN PAPANKE/ESPN-The Magazine; new ideas work.
NORMAN PEARLSTINE/what will be his role with AOL?
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CARLITO RODRIGUEZ/The Source; hip hop's top magazine.

JOY WOLMAN/new executive editor at AP, made Korea story work.
MICHAEL MILLER/WSJ front page editor; making a mark.

FRANCESCA AND RUSSO/no, it's not a restaurant; hot sports talk from WFAN.
SEAN MCMANUS/riding with Super Bowl; Tiger Woods as CBS sports guru.
JIM NANCE/CBS's best sports face; you'll see a lot of him this year.
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JOHN MACK CARTER/still listened to at Hearst.
BILL COLSON/keeps Sports Illustrated rolling.
ART COOPER/old pro keeps GQ competitive.
FRANK DE FORD/talking more on NPR; writing less.
DOMINIC DUNNE/perfect match with Vanity Fair.
BARBARA EPSTEIN AND ROBERT SILVERS/still The NY Review.
DAVID GRANGER/brings new life to Esquire.
MONICA GREENWOOD/Essence, magazine and business.
JIM HOGE/making some news at Foreign Affairs.
ROBERT HUGHES/who is Time's super-critic feuding with now?
WALTER ISAACSON/new role, new owner.
JOE KLEIN/top political insights; just don't be anonymous again.
LEWIS LAPHAM/Harper's remains an intellectual meeting place.
ELLEN LEVINE/godmother of women's magazines; fixing GH.
CAROLINE MILLER/New York searching for glory days.

BOOKS: AUTHORS & EDITORS & AGENTS. NY IS STILL THEIR PLACE

KEN AULETTA/media guru now taking on Microsoft.
ROBERT CARO/when do we get the next LBJ part?
JOAN DIDION/coming up: a collection of essays.
ANITA DIGGS/unique multicultural appeal.
JOHN GREGORY DUNNE/observer of scabrous mores.
MORGAN ENTREKIN/downtown hipster has the Beat.
JASON EPSTEIN/still casts a long shadow over book industry.
JONATHAN GALASSI/erudite heir apparent at Farrar Straus.
NAN GRAHAM/literary midwife to Frank McCourt.
PHYLLIS GRANN/Putnam gives us Clancy and Dickens.

OTHERS: THESE DON'T FIT IN ANY CATEGORY

JAMES GOODALE/former Times lawyer has mini-media show
PICK SIX: HALL OF FAMERS/Jimmy Breslin, William Buckley, Harry Evans, Pete Hamill, Norman Mailer, Abe Rosenthal.
NANCY MAYNARD/a solid voice of reason and experience.
THE REAL POWER/Doug Arthur, William Drewry, Kevin Gruneich, Tom Wolzien, Jessica Reif-Cohen, Henry Blodgett; Wall Street media analysts decide fates.
STEVE RATTNER/ex-journalist; heads media investment firm.

DAVID REMNICK/leads New Yorker renewal; writers' heaven.
CARLITO RODRIGUEZ/The Source; hip hop's top magazine.
ATOOSA RUBENSTEIN/CosmoGirl; spin-off a hit with teens.
STEVE SHEPARD/Business Week editor just knows how to do it.
MARTHA STEWART/put her picture on cover every time; it worked.
JOEL STEIN/Time's trendy wiseguy; fame is fleeting.
CALVIN TRILLIN/he makes us laugh and think.
JAMES TRUMAN/now if we knew what he really did.
CAROL WALLACE/in the People tradition of great editing.
JACOB WEISBERG/Slate's man in NY.
JANN WENNER/his Rolling Stone is still rolling along.
MARK WHITAKER/settling in as Newsweek's top editor.
OPRAH WINFREY/not in New York but her magazine is; it's a hit.
ANNA WINTOUR/battles for the glamour award at Vogue.
MICHAEL WOLFF/New York's media writer fires big guns.
STEVE YAHN/hard-edge news upgrading E&P.

ALEXANDER STAR/a thirty-something whiz editor; Lingua Franca.
CYNDI STIVERS/founding editor Time Out NY, new model for city magazines.
KATRINA VANDEN HEUVEL/enhancing the Nation.
FAREED ZAKARIA/made a mark at Foreign Affairs, now heads Newsweek International.



ANN GODOFF AND SONNY MEHTA/dueling gladiators within Random House empire.
JANE FRIEDMAN/on a roll; Murdoch's US books chief.
MICHAEL PIETSCH/youthful new head of Little Brown.

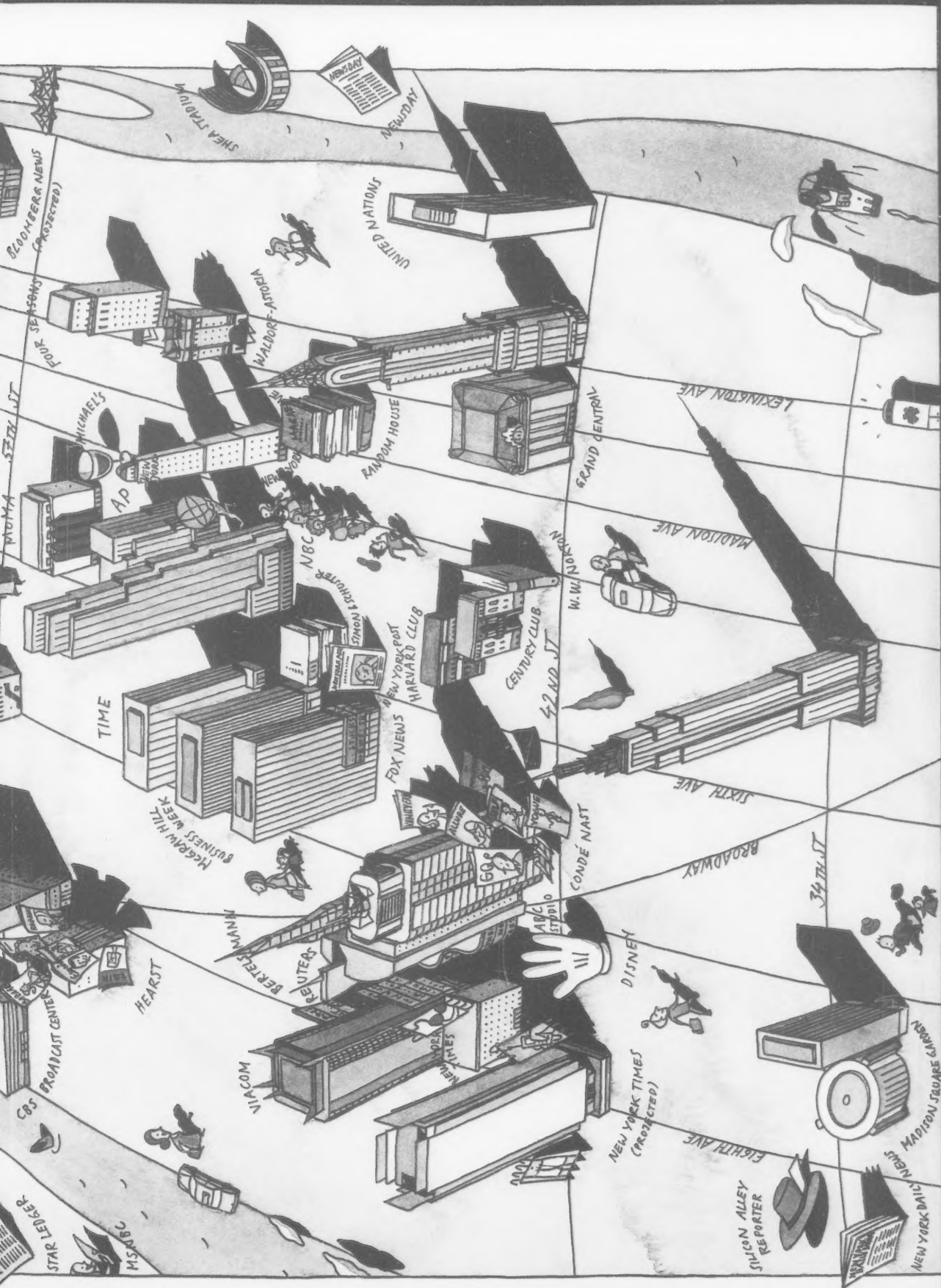
NEW MEDIA

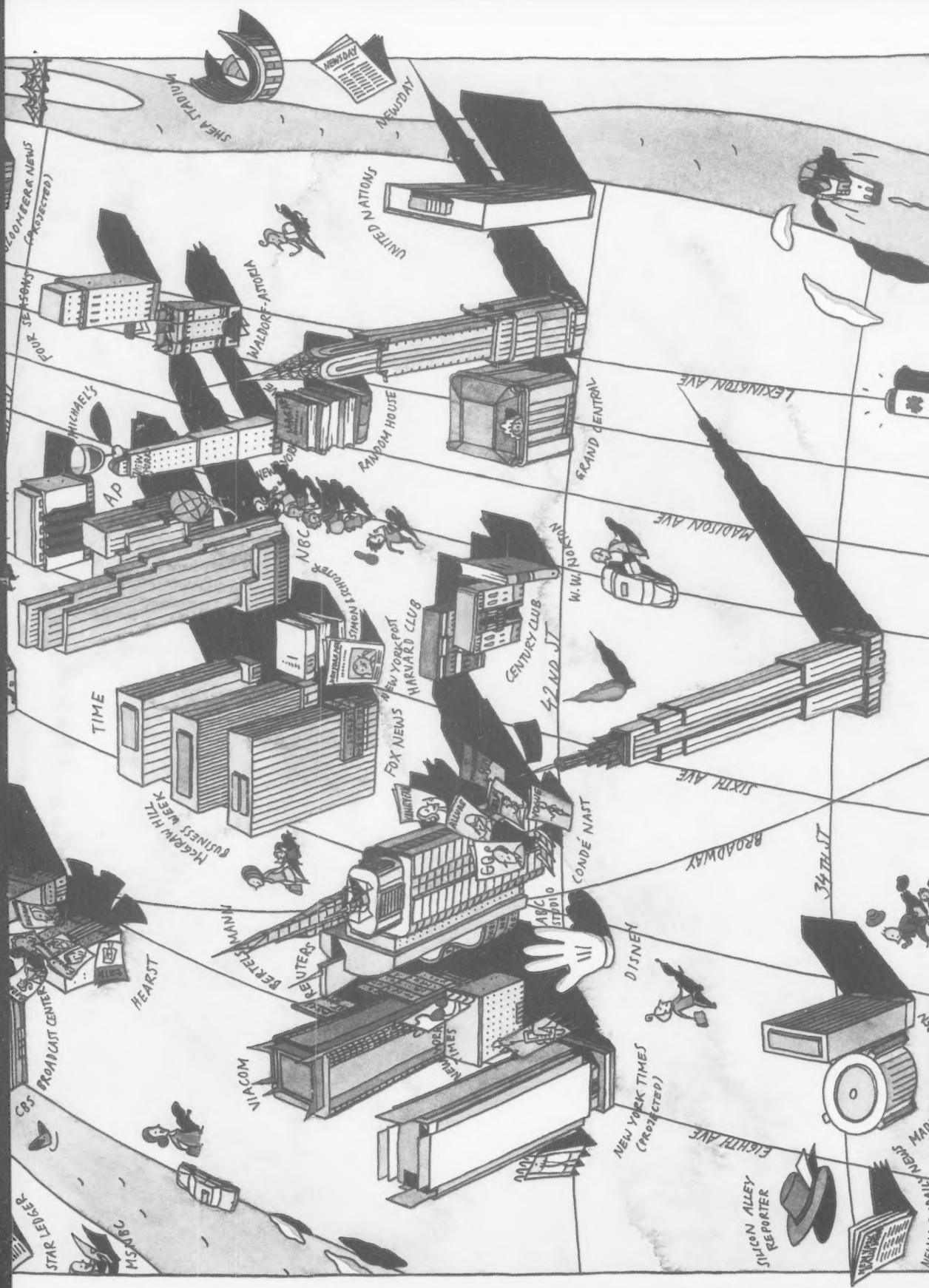
KURT ANDERSEN AND MICHAEL HIRSCHORN/they still believe in Inside.com and the Internet future.
JASON CALACANIS/chronicles Silicon Alley.
RICH JAROSLOVSKY/has found Web success with WSJ online.
MICKEY KAUS/Slate's emerging voice on politics.
JONATHAN KLEIN/veteran producer pioneers interactive news.
HOAG LEVINS/rebounding at Ad Age; dot-com guru.
THOMAS WEBER/WSJ e-columnist.

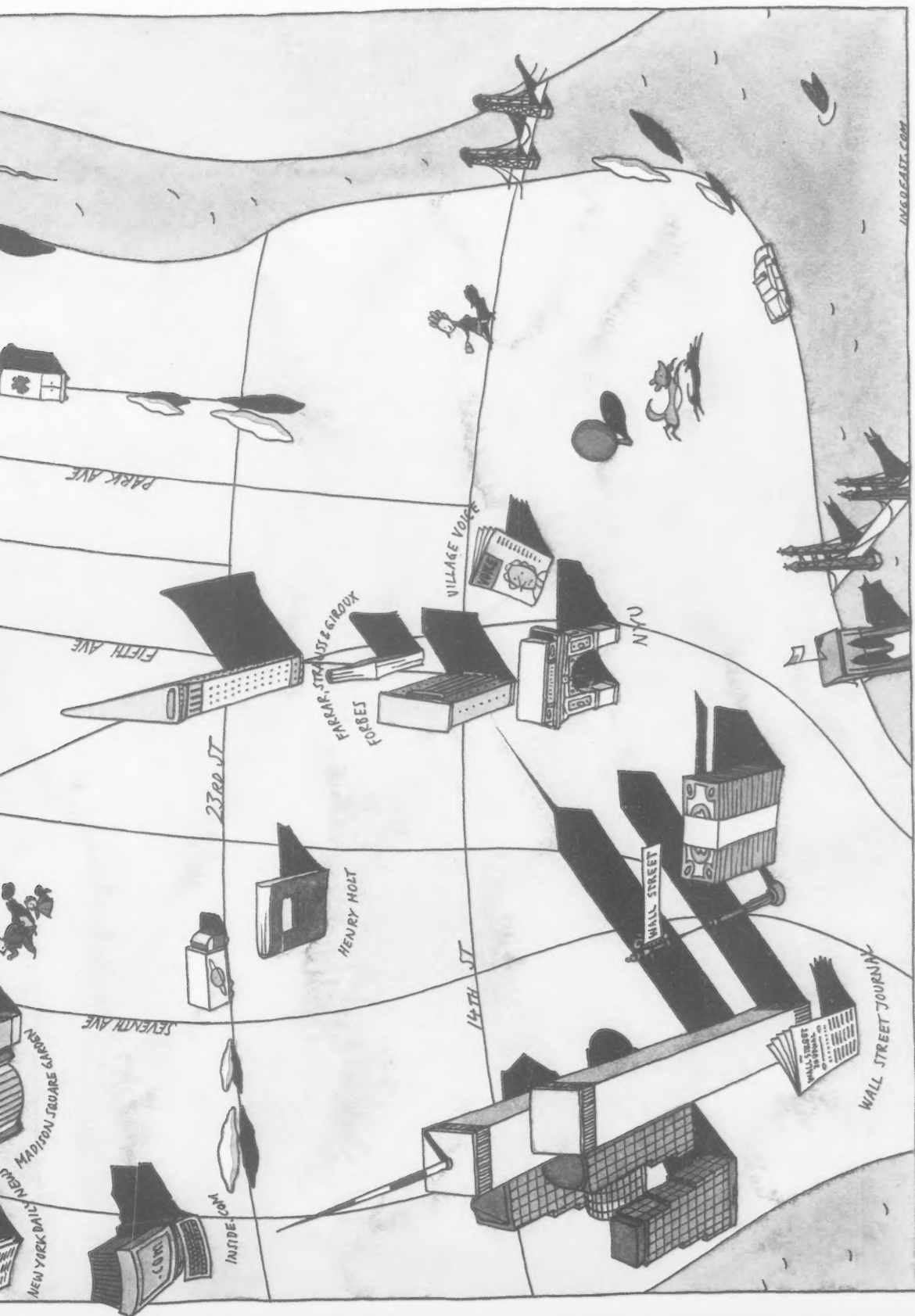
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MARCH 2001
COLUMBIA JOURNALISM REVIEW









MANHATTAN MINDSET



The World Sees News Through New York Eyes

BY BRENT CUNNINGHAM

Richard Berke's page-one story in *The New York Times* on October 25, 1999, turned Senator John McCain's temper into a campaign issue overnight. Until then, McCain's moods had been mentioned matter-of-factly, but were not part of the political conversation. Berke's story touched off weeks of coverage and debate in the media. ABC, NBC, CBS, CNN, Fox News, NPR, CNBC, as well as newspapers around the country, ran with the story. Even McCain's hometown paper, *The Arizona Republic*, followed the *Times*. New York rules.

When the Aviation Investment and Re-

form Act for the 21st Century — dubbed Air 21 — became law in April 2000, the story for underserved cities around the country was the addition of flights to New York and D.C., and how that could boost economic development and quality of life. But the national media, led by New York, paid little attention until they could see it from the other end. Only last fall, when the flood of new flights swamped La Guardia Airport, the hub of the Boston-to-D.C. corridor along which many in the media establishment move, did Air 21 win major-issue status. FLIGHT LOGJAM: HOW THE GOVERNMENT TURNED LA GUARDIA INTO A FLIER'S NIGHTMARE, was the page-one headline in *The Wall Street Journal* in December. CAN CAPITALISM REDUCE

FLIGHTS AND DELAYS AT LA GUARDIA? asked *The New York Times*. New York rules.

Mayor Rudolph Giuliani's troubles in 2000 — prostate cancer and a broken marriage — were national news in part because they ended his senate race against Hillary Rodham Clinton, but also because outside New York Giuliani is a minor celebrity, the blunt-talking lawman who tamed The Big Apple. But did it deserve a two-part segment on the *Today* show? Should *NBC Nightly News* and National Public Radio have ranked it among the year's major stories? And still the story has national legs. As recently as January 24, Giuliani was on *Good Morning America* discussing his health. Meanwhile, Mayor John Norquist of Milwaukee couldn't buy

AP/WIDEWORLD MARK (FURNISH)

that kind of attention (not that he wanted it). Norquist's affair with a staff aide — remember that? — got a brief spasm of national coverage in December, primarily because Norquist, who is married, took the extraordinary step of apologizing in a full-page ad in the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*. New York rules.

Nearly all our national media revolve in the same tight orbit, part of the more than 10,000 journalists roaming the island of Manhattan. The three main networks, *The New York Times*, *The Associated Press*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *Time*, and *Newsweek* are all close enough for journalists there to meet for a quick lunch. Here, too, are most of the book publishers and virtually every national magazine — from *Vanity Fair* to the *Journal of Polymorphous Perversity*. The ad folks who fill our national consciousness with slogans and images are in the neighborhood, as are the fashionistas who tell us what to wear. It is a largely self-selected group in a self-selected city, larded with Ivy Leaguers, a bit clubby. Some take the train from Westchester, others the subway from Brooklyn. Some lunch at Michael's, others at their desks. Some vacation in the Hamptons, others schlep to Jones Beach. Some play softball together, others drop into separate New York worlds after work. But they all read *The New York Times*. And most read *The New York Observer* — the irreverent scorekeeper of the city's power class — “as if it is the Koran,” says the media critic Jon Katz. Whether they were born here or not, they see the world through a New York lens. “Manhattan will New York-ize you,” says Michael Barone, a senior writer for Washington-based *U.S. News & World Report*.

There is something inevitable about Manhattan as media capital. “New York as a city is to the United States what the New York media are to the broader U.S. media,” says Alex S. Jones, a former press reporter at *The New York Times* who now heads Harvard's Shorenstein Center. “Not only the largest and the richest, but arguably the most important.” Or, as a slightly irritated Clyde Haberman, a *Times* metro columnist, put it: “We're the biggest city in America. I don't think it's much more complicated than that.” Many things happen in New York that are important to greater America: from hip-hop, which ushered urban culture into the suburbs, to Wall Street to the current trial of the embassy bombers.

“New York attracts the best and the brightest in so many different worlds that some of the best things that happen there are genuinely important,” says Brian Duffy, the executive editor of *U.S. News & World Report*.

But this convergence of geographic destiny, human nature, and powerful media means that life on this small island provides the context for national news, and shapes the news agenda. “The New York press has outsized power to inject stories into the news cycle,” says Jones. “That is the power of New York, if there is such a thing. It's where stories get started, because the decisions are made there.” News from all around the country passes through the New York filter. And despite conscious — and often successful — efforts on the part of many of these New York journalists to break free of Manhattan myopia, the America portrayed in the national media isn't always recognizable to readers and viewers west of the Hudson.

MANHATTAN MYOPIA

‘Decisions made in New York determine which issues become national news. As a result, some New York stories inevitably get inflated, while others are minimized, oversimplified, distorted, or just plain missed.’

Some argue that this media provincialism is on the wane, others that it never existed. “I always thought that was bullshit,” says Reuven Frank, a former president of NBC News. But ask journalists outside of New York, and they say it is as plain as night following day. “One in eight Americans lives in California,” says David Yarnold, executive editor of the *San Jose Mercury News*. “The East Coast media do not understand or tell the story of the west.” This phenomenon has results. Giuliani's tussle with the Brooklyn Museum of Art over the “Sensation” show becomes a seminal art-world event, but the Missouri Arts Council's refusal to fund a performance of “Bent,” a controversial play about the persecution of homosexuals in Nazi Germany, is ignored. New Yorkers pro-

jected Gore's election-night “victory” in Florida before all the polls had closed. Maybe they didn't know Florida has two time zones.

But in a broader, more subtle sense, decisions made each day by journalists in New York determine which issues become national news, what gets emphasized, what gets downplayed. In short, what is important for all of us. As a result, some New York (and northeastern) stories inevitably get inflated, while others from elsewhere are minimized, distorted, or missed. “Because so much of the news we get is packaged in New York, we are captives to how it is delivered,” says Evan Smith, a recovering New Yorker who now edits *Texas Monthly*. Jim Squires, a former editor of the *Chicago Tribune*, says the New York press is “often the last to know of some of the most important stories going on in the country. Look at the impact of companies like Wal-Mart.” Or look, others say, at the transformative power of the Internet and the emergence of Silicon Valley as an independent economic engine. Or the rise of immigration in middle America. Back in 1995, for example, *The Des Moines Register* was writing about the city school system's need for more teachers and tutors to meet the growing number of Hispanic, Bosnian, Sudanese, and Asian students. Yet during the 2000 Iowa caucuses, as the *Register*, tongue firmly in cheek, pointed out in an article that January, the national press often had difficulty seeing the new Iowa. IOWA IS A CORNY CLICHÉ IN VISITORS' REPORTING, read the headline. Daniel Pedersen, a veteran *Newsweek* contributing editor in Atlanta who has worked in bureaus in Los Angeles and Houston, says that his story pitches in the early '80s on the northeastward migration of Mexican-Americans drew yawns from his New York editors. “It is clear to me that, as a nation, we would have more quickly understood the meaning of this migration if the national press were based in Los Angeles,” he says.

This New York sphere of influence is evident at both Columbia University's journalism school — described by some as the “nursery” of the media elite — as well as here at CJR. With a limited travel budget and a glut of media talent a subway ride away, CJR editors are constantly challenged to ensure that voices — and issues — from around the country get into the magazine. The school, meanwhile, serves as

the unofficial convening authority for the city's media community. The lineup for this semester's magazine lecture series, for example, includes top editors from *Vanity Fair*, *Time*, *Newsweek*, *The New York Times Magazine*, and the now-deceased *George*. The memorial service for the Washington journalist Lars-Erik Nelsen was held at Columbia University. And then there's Al Gore. The faculty is culled, largely, from this same community. Bruce Porter, an assistant professor at the school and a magazine writer, says the "eastern establishment take" that is often found in New York publications comes not from playing squash or having dinner with someone, but from "sharing a point of view and, because of that, gravitating to a place where that point of view is acceptable and helps you establish a career."

There are inherent difficulties in attempting to write for a national audience, says James Carey, a professor of international journalism at Columbia. "It makes it difficult to really imagine who you are writing for," he says. "Our imagination moves on tracks, generally geographic tracks. Today, these tracks are the airline routes. We think in terms of a bicoastal country, with the Mississippi River running down the middle. Our imagination runs out of New York to places with New York connections, and our national society gets defined this way. The national media produce a national class system. We define the local through the national: 'Oh, look, they're doing the same thing in Waterloo, Iowa, that we do in New York.'"

What we know in our daily lives, Carey says, is the context for what is normal, and in New York those things get amplified through the concentration of national media.

THE DISCONNECT

'Journalists in New York view their jobs differently than colleagues based elsewhere'

Last year, Peter Brown, an editor at the *Orlando Sentinel*, surveyed journalists around the country and documented the demographic gap between reporters and their readers. Brown, a former *Nie-*

TEN THOUSAND JOURNALISTS

There are no exact figures compiled about the number of journalists working in Manhattan, but CJR has pieced together an estimate of at least 10,000. The total is based on official numbers from some news organizations and estimates of others. "Journalists" include reporters, producers, non-fiction writers, photographers, camera people, editors, graphic artists, and researchers.

CJR estimates:

| | |
|---------------------|-------|
| Magazines | 2,800 |
| Newspapers | 2,000 |
| TV Networks | 2,000 |
| Cable news channels | 750 |
| Local TV/radio | 750 |
| News services | 1,000 |
| New media | 200 |
| Free-lance | 500 |

because he "accepts it as a given that they are out of touch with the rest of America." According to Brown's study, as a group, journalists are more likely than their fellow Americans to be single, socially liberal, and affluent, and less likely to have children, go to church, and own homes.

Manhattan is arguably the least representative place in the country. Life here is different. We ride trains rather than drive cars. We pay ridiculous amounts of money to live in rented apartments with notoriously tiny kitchens. We cook less, opting instead to order in or dine out on everything from Afghan to Ukrainian food, not exactly staples at the local mall. We take for granted the staggering array of cultural options — theater, film, dance, art, music, museums. New York journalists are different. A 1998-99 survey by The Pew Research Center found that journalists working for national news organizations in New York view their jobs differently than their colleagues who are based elsewhere. For example, only 19 percent of these New York journalists thought the press is "more adversarial than necessary," whereas 40 percent of the non-New Yorkers thought so. Nearly 40 percent of the New Yorkers considered the celebrity interviewer Larry King a fellow journalist, while only 17 percent of those outside New York did.

Yet what is important in the lives of New York journalists, and the lives of their friends, can influence what becomes news. "If you live on the Upper West Side of Manhattan, and you are a young parent, you might see an issue developing about nannies," says Roger Cohn, a former executive editor of *Audubon* magazine who now edits *Mother Jones* in San Francisco. "It's easy to extrapolate that as some kind of trend. But you get out here and you find that proportionally fewer people use nannies." A 1996 *Newsweek* cover proclaimed — over an ominous cap-and-gowned silhouette — "\$1,000 a Week, The Scary Cost of College." A thousand dollars a week? That's nearly \$40,000 an academic year. Meanwhile, 80 percent of college students in this country attend public schools, according to The College Board, where the average cost of tuition, room, and board is \$8,400.

The economic extremes of life in New York are a factor. "New York-based reporters are much more often in self-pitying mode, suffering from this money mania because they have such a skewed view of what it takes to live comfortably," says James Fallows, the *Atlantic Monthly's* national correspondent. "This makes it hard in any genuine way to identify with the family living on the median income. Going out to Idaho, or even to New Jersey, to report on that family is akin to going to Ethiopia."

More fundamentally, we absorb the notion (even if we know better) that what happens in New York is generally more sophisticated, intelligent, interesting — in short, more important — than what happens "out there." It is not conspiratorial. Indeed, it is often unconscious. In a way, it comes with calling yourself a New Yorker. The city is a symbol, the legendary proving ground, the inspiration for songs, and the setting for countless movies. "It's the place where you reinvent yourself," says Alex S. Jones. "It is the terror of kicking over the traces and having to start your life anew in such a crowded, arrogant, competitive place. That is the stuff drama is made of . . . If you are there, you belong there, whether you are a stockbroker or a drag queen." A former senior editor at *Newsweek* says that Maynard Parker, the magazine's late editor, used to say "Everybody out there wants to know what's going on in New York." America is fascinated by New York, in a kind of love-hate way. But that fascination can be easily overplayed.

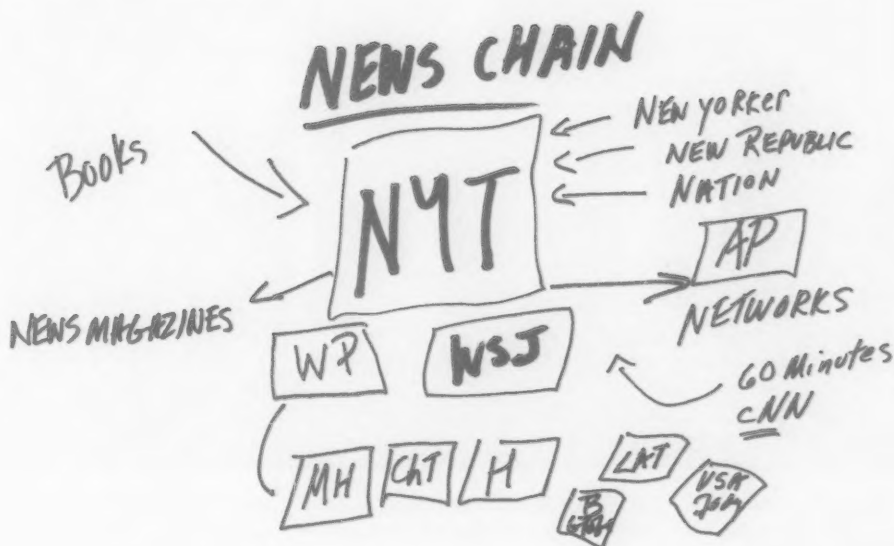


PHOTO ILLUSTRATION: NANCY MOORE

HOW NEWS FLOWS (MORE OR LESS)

Any diagram of how news flows in America will portray *The New York Times* as a major component. This one is a loose sketch drawn by the media observer Michael Massing for a classroom talk to students at the Columbia Graduate School of Journalism. Massing identified the *Times* as the originator of much of the news that the television networks, the news magazines, and others then develop. In turn, he shows some sources of the *Times*'s story ideas. Other outlets that consistently originate national news: *The Wall Street Journal* (WSJ) and *The Washington Post* (WP) as well as *The Miami Herald* (MH), the *Chicago Tribune* (CHT), the *Los Angeles Times* (LAT), the *Houston Chronicle* (H), and *The Boston Globe* (BGlobe).

SAME OLD STORY

'There is too heavy reliance on the judgments of an elite few'

The dawn of the digital age promised to fragment the news business, breaking — or at least loosening — New York's chokehold on media power. Maybe it will, but it hasn't yet. San Francisco and Los Angeles, along with the rest of the country, are still on the receiving end of news more often than not. "One myth created by the dot-com movement," says Fallows, "is that it wouldn't matter where people lived. For reporters it may be true, but that's the exception. It is natural that there is a capital of this intellectual community." There are even signs that the influence of the New York media is growing. Economic realities have humbled stand-alone online news

operations, opening the door to consolidation. *The New York Times* is now dropped on doorsteps from Seattle to Florida. Its news service has 650 subscribers worldwide. The *Times* also cut a deal last year with Starbucks to be the only paper sold in the ubiquitous coffee shops. The AP budgets and advisories — culled from around the country but assigned value by New York editors — along with the *Times*'s budgets and advisories, are powerful guides for editors. "I've sat in a lot of news huddles," says Deborah Howell, who runs the Newhouse News Service bureau in D.C. and is a former editor of the *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, "and I know a lot of editors who look closely at that *Times* budget to inform their decisions." The newsweeklies, too, pay attention to the news judgments of the major dailies. "That is how a lot of ideas get validated," says Fallows, who used to edit *U.S. News & World Report*. "The clearest way to know

that something is on the news map is for the *Times* to write about it."

Another reason why no great wave of democracy has swept the news business is the enduring power of the pack. Gregory Curtis, a former *Texas Monthly* editor, says "a prominent New York journalist" interviewed him about President Bush after the election. During the interview, the reporter said the problem with Bush is that he "just isn't very curious." Curtis, now an editor at large for Time, Inc., says it was the first time he had heard it put that way. "Then, a couple weeks later," he says, "I am reading a story on Bush and foreign policy in *The New York Times Magazine*, and there is that same idea phrased almost exactly the same way. I thought the two reporters must have discussed it at a party or something. Then, at the inauguration, there is Sam Donaldson saying that the trouble with Bush is that he lacks curiosity. I can't explain how



AP/WIDEWORLD/MARK LEON/REUTERS

it happens, but certain ideas achieve a critical mass in the national media." It could be that Bush isn't curious. But the timing is, well, curious.

How it happens is simple. "The dominant emotion in journalism is anxiety," says Danny Schechter, a former producer for *20/20* and CNN, and a cofounder of *Globalvision*, an independent production company. "There is nothing to be gained by being out in left field with something unless you are absolutely certain it is true." The result, says Schechter, is that there is too heavy a reliance on the news judgments of an elite few, and a narrowing of the public debate. David Halberstam, the author and former *Times* reporter, puts it more succinctly: "Everyone in journalism steals from everyone else."

When the story in question is a New York tragedy, the pack effect is magnified. In 1992, Malice Green, a black, unemployed steelworker, was stopped by Detroit police who suspected Green was carrying drugs. In the struggle that ensued, the officers beat Green to death with their flashlights. Two officers were convicted of murder. The incident, in the wake of the more spectacular but less tragic Rodney King beating in Los Angeles, was covered by the national press. But that coverage didn't approach the crescendo that turned the King beating, and more recently the Amadou Diallo shooting, into national referendums on police violence. A Lexis-Nexis database search for Green's name in 1992-1993 turned up 1,200 stories, most written by Detroit papers. Plug Diallo — the African immigrant shot to death in the Bronx two years ago by the New York City police — into Lexis-Nexis

for 1999-2000, and more than 8,000 stories come up, including a *Time* magazine cover story.

LEADER OF THE PACK

'People who are insecure about their own news judgment go crazy if they see a story in the Times'

Despite all of the new voices, *The New York Times* is still the country's most influential news source. Joseph Lelyveld, the *Times*'s executive editor, declined to discuss his paper's influence on the news agenda. But Herbert J. Gans, a Columbia University sociologist who has studied media influence, says that in any profession there is a standard-setter. "There has to be one paper that sets the standards, and usually it is the elite paper," he says. "They are the richest, they get the biggest staff."

The paper's influence can be direct. On January 2, for example, — which is the day after a national holiday and thus a traditionally slow news day — NBC, ABC, and CBS all picked up an enterprise story from the *Times*'s front page on how snack food makers are putting less in their packages and charging the same price.

And the influence can also be subtle. "Foreign correspondents know that what the *Times* guy writes is what their editors will be reading first thing in the morning," says Halberstam. National correspondents, too. This influence is clear

when the *Times* makes a mistake. On August 19, John Noble Wilford's front-page story in the *Times* reverberated around the world. "The North Pole is melting," it began, and went on to say how for the first time in more than 50 million years the ice that covers the Arctic Ocean at the pole had turned to water. It was global warming writ large. Papers from Anchorage to London picked up the story. *ABC World News Saturday* led with the ominous news that night. Turns out, a swath of the pole ice melts every year.

But this ability to elevate an issue — even a flawed one — to international prominence is evident time and again at the *Times*. There was a 1998 cancer-cure story, which overstated the impact of two new drugs. It led the three network newscasts the day it appeared in the *Times*, and was on the covers of *Newsweek*, *Time*, and *U.S. News & World Report* the next week. The story and its fallout prompted *U.S. News* to take a detailed look at how the *Times* still drives the news agenda. "The front page of *The New York Times* is still the benchmark," Paul Friedman, executive producer of *ABC World News Tonight* told *U.S. News* at the time. "Lots of people who are insecure about their own news judgment . . . go crazy if they see it in *The New York Times*." Consider the way an allegedly subliminal ad by the Bush campaign, which emphasized the word "rats" in "bureaucrats," became the big story for several days after it appeared on the front page of the *Times*, even though Fox News had reported it two weeks earlier — to virtually no effect.

The *Times*'s influence is difficult to measure. CIR commissioned Andrew Tyn-

dall, who monitors network news content in his weekly *Tyndall Report*, to compare the *Times's* front page with the nightly network news lineup over the last six months of 2000. Tyndall's numbers show that, in terms of daily breaking and event-driven news, the *Times* more often than not prints stories the morning after the networks air them. During the 130 weekdays Tyndall examined, for example, CBS covered 151 stories that were on that morning's front page while the *Times* put 249 stories on its front page that had been on CBS the previous evening. (For ABC, the numbers were 159 and 225, and for NBC they were 181 and 228.) This illustrates a couple of things. First, as a paper of record, the *Times* often serves as news ratifier rather than trend-setter. But perhaps more importantly, this shows how the rise of electronic media, and the subsequent non-stop news cycle, have changed the news-flow dynamic in the last twenty years. Tyndall says, "The news cycle is now less than twenty-four hours. So much happens during the day that what a mainstream audience sees on television news each evening reflects events that have happened since *The New York Times* was published, rather than twenty-hour-old news judgments."

Straight numbers, though, do not tell the full story. For example, each evening a budget of what will be on the *Times's* front page the next morning is dropped into the computers of the hundreds of news outlets that subscribe to the *Times's* news service. How this affects the news judgments, both within New York and beyond, is hard to quantify.

More importantly, Tyndall's study doesn't get at the indirect influence of how the *Times* frames an issue in its analysis and enterprise pieces. In this regard, the paper's impact on the news agenda is often not same-day. Consider the McCain temper story. It ran on a Monday. That evening, there was nothing about it on network news. Tuesday morning the trickle began. MSNBC mentioned it briefly. So did *Good Morning Arizona*. The *Arizona Republic* said McCain's temper had "emerged as a national campaign issue . . . as *The New York Times* raised the question of whether McCain's personality could become a major drawback for him." By Wednesday the story was picking up steam. CNN had it on *Inside Politics*, and Fox News's Brit Hume mentioned it in his report. Thursday it was on *Crossfire*. Nearly two months later, McCain's temper was still in the news, turning up in December in a

60 Minutes II segment, on *The Late Show With David Letterman*, and in a substantive piece on *ABC World News Tonight*.

"My friends at the networks will say, 'You don't understand the important function you play,'" says Richard Berke, the *Times's* national political writer, who wrote the McCain story. "You still have the network executives waking up in New York and reading the *Times*. It's their paper."

WILL IT CHANGE?

'Good reporting can counter unavoidable provincialism'

Several people interviewed for this article asked, rhetorically, if the situation would be any different if the national media were based somewhere else, Los Angeles, for example. The answer, it seems, is both yes and no. As Brown's survey showed, journalists as a class share certain traits and values that set them apart from mainstream America. So on the one hand there would still be, as Danny Schechter says, too much news "about the people who run the world rather than the people who have to live under that rule." But on the other hand, news would undoubtedly reflect more of the concerns and interests of southern California and the wider American west. The power crisis — a national story as it is — would be a page-one fixture. Same with the murder of L.A. police chief Bernard Parks's granddaughter. Former New York Police Commissioner Howard Safir's Revlon-backed junket to the Oscars, meanwhile, might rate a line or two in gossip columns. (The Safir item, by the way, turned up in newspapers around the country, in *Newsweek*, and on the *CBS Early Show*.)

West Coast tunnel vision is no improvement, of course. "The problem is that we don't have a fully varied national media," says Roger Cohn. "And the worst thing about it is that there are everyday problems and injustices that are not being exposed because they don't make the radar screen in New York."

Good reporting can — and often does — counter this unavoidable provincialism, says James Carey. "What matters is the degree to which we check our assumptions against the data, that we write it with care." *USA Today* — the national newspaper not based in New York — has systematically tried to steer clear of the New York-northeastern vortex. In the

early days, there were staff meetings and memos on the dangers of "eastern bias." Today, that has mostly given way to a heavy reliance on its national network of bureaus, says Taylor Buckley, who retired in 1999 after seventeen years at the paper, during which he was the unofficial eastern-bias czar. He says *USA Today* needed to "create this artificial barrier" and constantly remind itself that it was a national paper. "I used to raise hell with reporters who framed a story geographically, because the sweep inevitably began in the east and moved west, or began in the north and moved south. It's a small thing, but it betrayed an eastern bias. It's not conspiratorial, it's just who they hang out with, what they read."

The *Times* tweaks the front page of its national edition to reflect a more geographically diverse audience. Most of *The Wall Street Journal's* reporting staff is based outside New York; its technology coverage is based in Silicon Valley, for instance, and its national staff for retail reporting is in Chicago. Getting out of Manhattan is key, either in person or with correspondents and stringers. Priscilla Painton, an assistant managing editor at *Time*, points to two cover stories — "The Backbone of America" in July 1997 and "Life on the Mississippi" in July 2000. For the first, a team of reporters, editors, and photographers rode a bus along Highway 50 from Maryland to San Francisco, gathering stories on things like economic disparity in an Ohio school system and the struggle of a ranching community in Colorado to grow. For the second, a similar team rode a boat down the Mississippi to New Orleans, dredging up stories on a gay, black writer in Memphis, for example, and the effort to revitalize river towns in Iowa. "We risked ridicule," Painton says. "Any time you say you're going to put a bunch of journalists on a bus across country, there are people who will say, 'There go the New Yorkers trying to discover America.'"

Painton's plaint demonstrates the impossibility of covering a beat as large and diverse as America to everyone's satisfaction. *Newsweek's* Daniel Pedersen says he hopes the democratization of the media that some argue is under way is never fully realized. "The world needs an editor," he says, "and the ones we have are pretty good. They are not perfect and can be a bit provincial, but so can everyone else." ■

Brent Cunningham is associate editor of CJR and has been a Manhattan resident for the past three years.

NO DEGREES OF SEPARATION

Working and Partying — It's All in the Media Mix



Party people: lawyer James Goodale with former hostage Terry Anderson

BY LINDSAY FABER

A lunch date at Michael's, the media hotspot at 24 West Fifty-fifth Street. On this day the reservation list includes Arthur Taylor, formerly of CBS; Peter Price, of *Avenue Magazine*; Glenda Bailey, of *Marie Claire*; Michael Davies of ABC; Owen Lister, the literary agent; Michael Wolff, the *New York* media columnist; John Tisch, owner of the Regency Hotel; and Heather Cohane, of *Hamptons Magazine*, among others. And this is only one day.

On his way in, Price stops off at Tisch's table to say hello, and on his way out, Tisch stops off at Bailey's table to bid her a friendly goodbye. At Michael's, the tables are spaced with just enough distance between them to afford each meeting a little privacy. Still, it is almost guaranteed that you will run into a media acquaintance or a connection over your medium-rare skirt steak and sparkling water.

But Michael's (or Elaine's, for dinner) is only a foot in the door. The real elite

has to pick among weekly invitations to functions like magazine anniversaries, film openings, book parties, or a Tina Brown gala. James Goodale's October party at the Four Seasons is a good example. The party, thrown by his wife, Toni Goodale, to celebrate the fifth anniversary of the PBS series *The Digital Age*, which Goodale hosts, is like a networking, name-dropping nirvana. Roaming the crowd in the Grill Room under the thousands of balloons dangling from the ceiling — amidst the chicken satay and pâté — are, to name a few, Michael Bloomberg, Tom Brokaw, Morley Safer, Howell Raines, Kevin Buckley, Peter Osnos, Walter Isaacson, and Kofi Annan.

There they are: Osnos chatting with Buckley, Arthur Sulzberger chatting with Tom Brokaw, Victor Navasky chatting with Lillian Ross. Betsy Gotbaum, head of the New York Historical Society, is speaking freely about how Liz Smith's column in the *New York Post* is "a wonderful place to be." Conversation carries on over scallops and Schnapps. At mo-

ments, the circles overlap, trading one member for another.

"Did you read my story yesterday?" Somebody asks. "Quite good" is the answer.

In the New York media playground, the line between business and pleasure is a fine one. Members of the media do business at these parties. They say there is a culture in today's media world that suggests the need to be a player. "There's a lot of chumminess," concedes Joe Ferrer, executive editor of *Time*. "These days, I don't think you can afford to be insular. Today, if you want to publish a successful magazine, you need to have other people be aware of it."

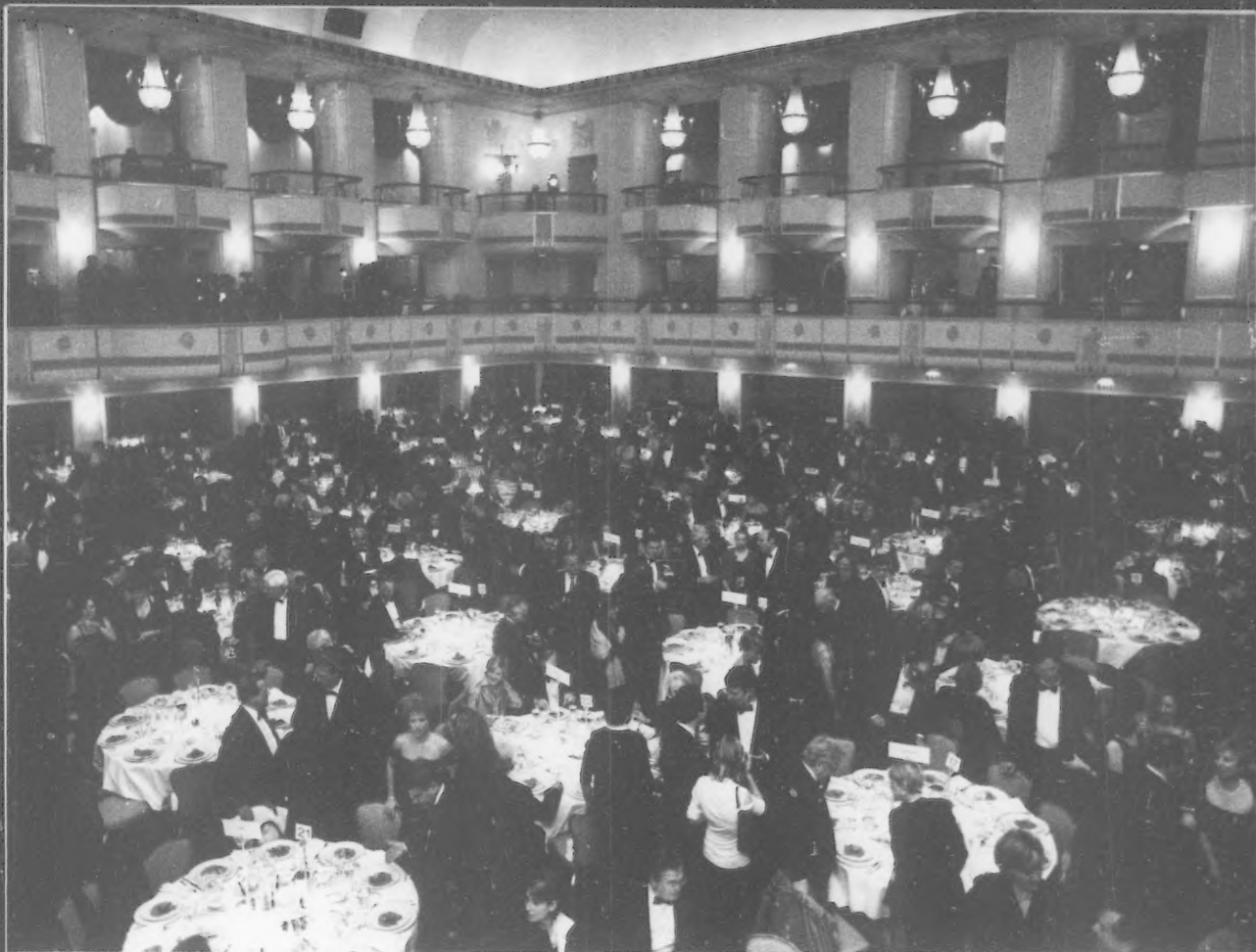
Patrick McMullan of *New York* magazine agrees: "I've introduced business deals many times because I know who the players are. I've literally said, 'Person A meet Person B' because one of them could benefit from the other — like if someone has a book coming out and the other is the editor of a major magazine, for instance."

Not everyone thinks this tight social system is a wonderful thing. "The people who hang out together in that elitist group have the smoothest cheeks in the world because they kiss each other so much," says Don Forst, editor-in-chief of *The Village Voice*. "They all read the same papers, they all endorse each other's books and they all think they're wonderful."

Still, they work hard at playing. A senior writer who covers the media for a major newspaper says these parties are all about business: "I usually look over the invitations to these parties and see who is coming, and I think to myself, 'Hmmm, I have questions to ask five or six of these people. If I go to the party, I can get what I need.' I don't think anyone comes to these things without intentions." Reese Schonfeld, one of the founders of CNN, says he can do more business "in one lunch hour than I could do in a month at the office."

This social culture, meanwhile, is a commercial force, and nobody knows more about employing it than Peggy

CONTINUED ON PAGE 35



Main event: The Committee to Protect Journalists' benefit dinner in the Grand Ballroom at the Waldorf-Astoria

The Party of the Year

BY MICHAEL HOYT

For the tenth annual International Press Freedom Awards dinner, the venue was the Grand Ballroom of the Waldorf-Astoria on Manhattan's Park Avenue. The dress code: black tie. Over time the affair has become the A-list media gathering, where powerful New York press people and several hundred of their acquaintances meet each year to briefly regard the rest of the troubled world. It is an event with many parts, not all of them seamlessly joined.

The dinner is in support of the Committee to Protect Journalists, an organization that does just what its name promises for reporters, editors, and publishers facing repression and worse around the globe. The committee came up with the idea of a benefit dinner a decade ago, around the time it lost its office lease, and the affair

saved its bacon. Pass-the-hat cocktail parties didn't raise enough money, nor did journalist membership drives. But going upscale did. By now, tables are available on a sliding scale, from \$5,000 to \$25,000, purchased by the likes of Bloomberg, Lexis-Nexis, Verizon Communications, Dan and Jean Rather, Continental Airlines, *The Industry Standard*, *The Nation*, Phil Donahue and Marlo Thomas, The Reebok Human Rights Foundation, Viacom, and Philip Morris Companies.

Like most such events it begins with a cocktail hour. Gene Roberts chats with Clarence Page; Osborne Elliott with Kati Marton and Richard Holbrooke; Mike Wallace with Andy Rooney; David Remnick with James Kelly, who is being roundly congratulated for his elevation to managing editor of *Time*. This year's dinner features a special award for Otis Chandler, so the east coast party has a west coast

wing from the late Times-Mirror. Soon we all migrate to the Grand Ballroom, which is vast and kind of breathtaking. Alex Donner & His Orchestra provide music, to which no one listens.

This is all back on November 21, the night the nation is waiting for big news from the Florida Supreme Court, so the dinner's scheduled host, Tom Brokaw, has to stay late at the office. An affable Dave Marash of *Nightline* substitutes, and introduces Ann Cooper, the executive director of CPJ, stunning in a thin-strapped red dress. Next come the heroes, the four men who form the centerpiece of the evening, honored for courageous journalism in the face of serious, strong, and sometimes brutal repression. The first is actually present only via video, on a large screen in front of the lush blue curtains at the front of the ballroom. Mashallah Shamsolvaezin is

REAL COURAGE: FOUR WHO RISK ALL



ZELJKO KOPANJA

Zeljko Kopanja, co-founder and editor of *Nezavisne Novine*, Bosnia-Herzegovina's largest Serb daily, survived a 1999 assassination attempt that cost him his legs. Undaunted, Kopanja continues to work, calling the idea of abandoning his craft "treasonous." In covering war-torn Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kopanja faces opposition from criminal groups controlled by the secret police, economic pressures, and an unstable government. In its five years of publication, *Nezavisne Novine* has seen its journalists threatened, distribution thwarted, and vendors jailed. Kopanja says these obstacles don't deter him, but rather heighten the importance of his work. "By expressing the truth," Kopanja says, "we can help my country become one of love and not hatred."

— Chris DelGrosso



MASHALLAH SHAMSOLVAEZIN

Mashallah Shamsolvaezin has been the editor of several leading reformist publications in Iran — *Jameah*, *Tous*, *Neshat*, and *Asr-e-Azadegan* — which were all successively banned. He is currently serving a thirty-month sentence in Iran's Evin prison for allegedly offending Islamic principles. His crime: publishing an article criticizing capital punishment in Iran. Shamsolvaezin had been targeted for years for "pushing the margins of freedom in Iran," says Joel Campagna, CPJ's Middle East and Africa coordinator. With Shamsolvaezin and other reformist journalists imprisoned "the authorities have effectively eliminated the reformist press which has been so essential in triggering one of the greatest democratic debates in Iranian history," Campagna says.

— Kate Pinsley

MODESTE MUTINGA

Modeste Mutinga, publisher and co-founder of the Democratic Republic of Congo's only independent daily newspaper, *Le Potentiel*, routinely takes the government to task for its corruption and injustice. For this work, he has been harassed, assaulted, and arrested. "In a country without democracy and without a proper government, journalists find themselves working with the opposition," says Mutinga. "To go against the government is seen as subversive." Mutinga has built his career practicing such "subversion." He founded several local press freedom groups and launched a printing company to insure distribution of his paper and other independent newspapers. Mutinga hopes his efforts give voice to what he calls "the nation's silent majority."

— Chris DelGrosso



STEVEN GAN

Steven Gan, co-founder and editor of *Malaysiakini* (www.malaysiakini.com), was fed up with Malaysia's restrictions on the media. Gan had been a print journalist, and faced intimidation and imprisonment for writing investigative articles that defied government controls. So, understanding that Malaysia does not censor the Internet for fear of dampening investment, Gan decided to go virtual. "I was unhappy with the sorry state of our mass media," he says. "I wanted to create a source of alternative information. The Internet is a medium that can help to break the government monopoly of information. People are able to see that there is other news that is not being reported."

— Soo Kim



in Evin prison in Tehran, seven months into a thirty-month sentence for running afoul of Islamic principles during the press reform movement that was recently crushed in Iran.

The second honoree is there in the flesh. A fellow Internet journalist, Michael Kinsley, introduces Steven Gan of *Malaysiakini.com*, an editor who has found that the World Wide Web can provide a route around a repressive government. The third hero, Modeste Mutinga of the Democratic Republic of Congo, is a large-shouldered man with a fierce gaze. His speech is translated from the French, and more clearly than some might have wished: "Although three million people have died in my country in the past two years, I feel that the American press has not been moved to action."

"I denounce this indifference," he says. The applause is tepid.

The chill of Mutinga's words is lifted, though, when the fourth hero, a tough

but sweet-faced newspaper editor named Zeljko Kopanja, begins his speech with the words, "Ladies and gentlemen, colleagues . . ."

In 1999, Kopanja started his car one October morning on the way to coffee and found himself looking across the car seat at one of his legs. He lost both of them, in fact, to the bomb. This was payback from fellow Serbs for his newspaper's exposure of their killing of Bosnian Muslims. He climbs the steps to the podium slowly and carefully, a crutch in each hand, and thanks the committee for the award. It will offer encouragement, he says, to "all the people of my country who prefer the truth to lies, the light to darkness . . ." The crowd explodes in applause. It is the emotional high note of the evening.

There is applause too when Otis Chandler, who gets an award for a lifetime of achievement in the cause of press freedom, uses his speech to evi-

cerate the "completely unqualified" Mark Willes and Kathryn Downing for dragging down his beloved *Los Angeles Times*. Then we move on to the smoked salmon, medium-rare beef, and some good Merlot.

Two elements brought an extra touch of the surreal to the CPJ affair this time around. One was the imminence of the Florida ruling, which, it was thought at the time, might finally settle the presidential election. At around 10 P.M., the court's pro-Gore, let-the-recount-proceed ruling was announced, the news beamed onto the big screen. A cheer started to rise, then fell, as guests seemed to recall that political neutral is the proper gear at a journalistic event.

The other element was a group of Columbia students, two tables full of them, fanning out before the serious eating began, to question the New York media figures about the nature of the New York media elite. On the whole, the students

disapproved of all the glitz. They were there as part of a J-School class meant to consider just what it means to have so many journalists on one island, working and socializing and thinking together and then telling the nation the news.

One student, Donna Ladd, approached Hodding Carter III, who launched into a hearty criticism of the "self-reflecting glory" of the media elite. "One reason we're in deep trouble in this country is it's mostly about our own mirrors," he said, "with half the people adjusting their ties." Camille Finefrock spoke to Peter Arnett, who lamented that the press has cut way back on foreign coverage. "To compensate," he says, "they back this event."

She also spoke to Osborne Elliott, a former dean of the J-School, who declared that "there is a media elite, and I'm the head of it." He would later joke to another student that Walter Isaacson is the elite's only member. Steve Brill announced to Erica Pearson that the subject of New York's media elite is "a ridiculous idea for an issue." (Oh?)

Others saw something to talk about. Rick MacArthur, publisher of *Harper's*, told another student, Lindsay Faber, that he worries about a "total disconnect between the media and the working class now." Danny Schechter, who runs a production company called Globalvision, told Faber that there is indeed such a thing as a media elite, and that the trajectory of the annual CPJ affair, to the ritziest part of New York, is a reflection of its direction. After dessert, after the last of the speeches, and full of dinner and stories of real journalistic courage, we all went out to search for taxis in the cold.

What was that mild glow that some of us felt? Was it the Merlot, or was it a sense of connection to something large? Journalists in places like New York do not face tests of character like car bombs or prison. No Taliban here. No thugs to beat us. Still, we have our demons to face. We have subtle ones, like careerism or cynicism or commercialism, or the failure to see beyond our own gilded worlds. Some inspiration can't hurt.

Andy Rooney, looking rumpled despite a fine black tuxedo, told another of the persistent students, Kate Novack, that at the CPJ dinner "there is a bonding that takes place that strengthens the standards we all hope to maintain." The dinner raised \$1,043,515, meanwhile, for the committee to continue its work. ■

Michael Hoyt is CJR's executive editor.



Surveying the scene: Clarence Page and Jessica Siegal

My Search for the Media Elite

BY VIKRAM SURA

Jessica Siegal's fingers were gliding around a goblet of white wine that she held in her left hand. She was dressed in a black, hugging ball gown, fringed at the wrists and hemline in smooth fur. Without my soliciting, she whispered into my ear the right questions to be asked to the guests at the black-tie Committee to Protect Journalists dinner at the Waldorf-Astoria.

"I teach interviewing at NYU," she said as she slid into the conversation I was having with an uninhibited Clarence Page, who also held a goblet of white wine.

Page knew who Jessica was and in his jovial way said, "Ask her what you are asking me. He is asking is there a New York media elite establishment. He is from Columbia Journalism School."

Jessica offered a few thoughts, but as I took my writing pad out she warily said, "Don't quote me," and then began to coach this poor third-world reporter. And I enjoyed it.

She remained standing, listening to our conversation as Page gave his take on the media elite.

"I tend to subscribe to 'don't tell what to think, tell what to think about,'" he said. "I came into journalism in the sixties, during Vietnam and the race riots. There were 300 riots then and they needed someone to go there and report without getting hurt."

"Now," he continued, "the media are catering to entertainment. I'm not opposed to what people want. You can't have broccoli news always. Everyone needs ice cream. But they need to eat broccoli too. For example, the health-care issue."

Jessica crooned over my left ear: "Ask him for specifics."

As she spoke, I couldn't help noticing that she smelled like a rare version of lavender flowers.

"Sir," I asked turning to Page, "you spoke about issues being trivialized. Are there any issues you feel that are not on the agenda?"

"Go outside the corporate debate," he said. "You just had the Clinton plan and the Congress plan. Where was the Canadian health plan? You had thirty votes in Congress [in favor of discussing the Canadian plan] but those votes don't get the press."

Jessica again wanted to help. She took



A few minutes with . . . Andy Rooney with Mary and Mike Wallace

my shoulder and again gently whispered.

"There's Andy Rooney," she said. "Go ask him."

Page introduced me to Rooney. "He is a Columbia journalism student and he wants to ask you something."

Rooney stared at my chest.

"Sir, do you feel there is a New York media elite establishment?" I inquired.

"What?" he shot back.

I obviously didn't phrase my question well.

"Is there a media elite centered in New York that creates an agenda, an agenda that Washington takes up?"

"Well, a capital has to exist. There has to be a center. It's not bad. It's not a conspiracy. It brings lots of people together. And," he said, "it's like telling the truth as close as we can."

Earlier in the evening, the TV producer Harry Moses, shouldering his way through the human maze, had dismissed the premise of my question.

"It's a silly issue. It boggles the mind that you are doing this," he said. "I don't think they set the agenda. Tell me who is the elite? Anchors? People like you? That's not New York. B-u-l-l-shit. People network. That's all," he said. "Who is your professor?"

"Um, Navasky and Laventhol."

"Doesn't Navasky have anything to do? For that you're doing this, paying forty t-h-o-u-sand dollars in tuition?" he said.

I walked to the wine bar and asked for a refill.

And there he was: Mike Wallace!

It took me several minutes before I got to him.

"Sir, would you spend three minutes with a fan of yours from India?" I said after he pricked up his ears.

"Yes, yes." He nodded. He too had his palm around a wine goblet.

"I'm from *Columbia Journalism Review*. My editors asked me to come today and find out from here whether a New York media elite exists. Is it an illusion or . . . does it really exist?"

"B-u-l-l-shit," he said.

Harry Moses walked up and joined the conversation.

"Are you not in the elite?" he kiddingly asked Wallace. Wallace guffawed. "There used to be people who were paid attention to. Cronkite."

"But then why would Vladimir Putin attend Tom Brokaw's dinner?" I asked him. (See "Dinner with Vladimir," page 35.)

"Because, I'd imagine, Vladimir saw Brokaw as a figure. He is a figure in the U.S. media," Wallace said.

"Which means he is an elite?" I asked. "Why should Putin attend his dinner?"

"That showed his naiveté. He is a new boy on the block. His aides will tell him, 'He is Tom Brokaw.' And Putin will say, 'Hi, hello,'" said Wallace, imitating the stiff carriage of Vladimir Putin.

"Brokaw gets more out of it than the president does," Wallace said, then imitated Tom Brokaw: "'The president of Russia came to my party.'"

"He didn't go to Dan Rather; he didn't come to me," Wallace added.

Soon the mass moved into the main room. Before I sat down at table 81 in the back, I looked around for my helpful guide.

Jessica was right up in the front row along with Page. I asked, "Jessica. Jessica, could you tell me who are the people sitting in the front row in this hall?" But she said she was tired after "all this" (she lifted her wine goblet). So I returned to table 81.

I kept my eye on the tables of *Harper's* magazine and George Soros's Open Society Institute for about an hour into the proceedings. They were all there, I suspected, to have a good time, like me. My eavesdropping near their tables did not really reveal anything substantial.

But the couple at a table in the middle of the room were most interesting. Two hours into the proceedings, they were cooing like pigeons in love. They practiced kissing, and permutations of kissing, on each other. I overheard him asking for her telephone number, or room number. But just as I walked closer from behind the pillar to see what she was writing, the gentleman became suspicious and I had to retreat.

I approached U.N. Ambassador Richard Holbrooke near the front entrance and he asked me to wait. Just then Mike Wallace appeared and shook Holbrooke's hand like an equal and walked out. Harry Moses also emerged, shook Holbrooke's hand unlike an equal and walked out.

Holbrooke's wife, Kati Marton, had to remind him that I was still waiting. "Two of you have already spoken to me," he said in a measured tone. I backed off.

The evening concluded. The hall was silent and empty. I picked up books and literature from the floor. It struck me as odd that the people who sat at these tables could throw these things away.

From one of the entrances to the hall, I saw the kissing couple emerge. He was drunk. She was, well, whatever. He came up to me and mumbled, "Merrill Lynch."

I had noticed earlier in the evening that Jessica came without an escort. Toward the end, just as I tried to wriggle out of the room to get to her, *CJR's* executive editor, Michael Hoyt, walked up. He wanted to talk. So we did. And I never saw Jessica again. ■

Vikram Sura is a student at Columbia's Graduate School of Journalism.

RULES OF THE GAME

What Journalism School Won't Teach You



Shop talk: James Kelly, managing editor of *Time*; *New Yorker* editor David Remnick

BY ERIC ALTERMAN

Rules of conduct for the exclusive media elite in New York — I call them the MetaMedia (MM) — bear precious little relation to those taught inside the nation's top journalism schools. If Hollywood is often described as "high school with money," the New York media elite is "high school on somebody else's dime." True, the top denizens of the media aristocracy are paid in significant seven figures. (A few even hover closer to eight.) But most toil away for not much more than movie moguls pay their masseuses. And because media mavens are pretty certain they could be earning like investment bankers or corporate lawyers if only they had been willing to settle into so boring and monotonous a life, a great deal of effort goes into embracing and achieving a life-style that vastly exceeds their means. Two-hundred-dollar expense account lunches, free tickets for sold-out Broadway shows, four-star hotels, the free weekend in the Hamptons timed to the "artists vs. writers" softball game, and the like are measures not only of physical but also of psychological comfort.

New York's MetaMedia is one of the few communities in America — and probably the only one in this insanely expensive city — where rankings and respect have no direct corollary to earnings. A top reporter at *The New York Times* is paid less than half what an anonymous producer of some dreadful sitcom watched "out there" makes. *Harper's* editor, Lewis Lapham, once told me that he makes more money writing paid advertorial for a free golf magazine than he does editing his tony magazine. But nobody cares what some golf writer or sitcom producer thinks about John Updike or Norman Mailer's latest attack on Tom Wolfe, much less the latest U.S. bombing mission in Kosovo. And they sure don't get invited by (the beautiful, brilliant) Peggy Siegal to a buzz-building dinner at Le Cirque following a private screening of the new Gwyneth Paltrow flick.

There is no clear old-fashioned equivalent of the football team or the cheerleaders in the MetaMedia. Where you stand depends in large measure upon where you sit. Brains count on paper, but looks count in front of the camera. Having cool friends matters in the gossip

columns, which can help, particularly in TV. Making lots of money is, of course, better than not, but it works as a means of keeping score only within your particular sub-strata, i.e. Rather vs. Jennings, Walters vs. Sawyer, and Tina vs. Harry.

No matter what part of the MM world you work in, there are certain rules that everybody seems to know as if by osmosis. For instance, one day power lunches simply picked up and moved eleven blocks north from "44" at the Royalton hotel to Michael's, where the food is not as good.* Dinner, however, remained at Elaine's, unless somebody was springing for *The Four Seasons* or the ABC News Commissary (also known as Café des Artistes). Four Seasons works for any meal, but nobody goes to Elaine's for lunch and nobody goes to Michael's for dinner. Why? Don't ask me. (The food at Elaine's is another reason to wonder if the members of the media elite are not nearly so smart as they think.) Other rules include: Stick to the crabcakes at the Century; Don't break a sweat in the softball game; Never quote a book you're reading unless it's still in galley; Politics do not matter except on the extremes (as liberals and conservatives of all stripes are welcome provided they can laugh at their own kind). All intra-MM conversations are off the record unless explicitly put back on, usually in a phone call or e-mail the following day. And perhaps most important, always have an excuse for why you weren't there, if it's somewhere your reputation might suffer for your having been missing. This goes for Tina Brown's parties at various national landmarks as well as any remotely reputable lists of the best in the business. (I, for instance, am conveniently ineligible to be on *CJR's* Media 200 by virtue of having agreed to write this article.)

Like Picasso (or Ornette Coleman), if you've demonstrated that you've mastered the rules, you are allowed to show off a bit by openly breaking them. For instance, at a CPJ dinner a couple of years back, Tom Brokaw took an interesting, calculated risk — in praising the dinner organizational efforts of *Time's* editor-in-chief, Norman Pearlstine, the anchor noted that such talents must be the reason that Walter Isaacson, then *Time's*

* People seem naturally to conclude that 44's downfall is a product of Condé Nast's move to Times Square and the opening of the luscious and incredibly underpriced Frank Gehry cafeteria. Alas, the switch preceded the move to Times Square by nearly two years.



Laughing matter: UN Ambassador Holbrooke, Kati Marton, and Osborne Elliott

managing editor, was able to put out the newsweekly while still managing to attend virtually every cocktail party in Manhattan.

The gambit was risky for two reasons. In the first place, Brokaw is well known for being the only superstar who manages to give Isaacson a run for his money in the cocktail-party Olympics. Second, at first glance the anchor appeared to be violating an unwritten-but-extremely-rigid law of high-level MM toasts: "Always Rib Upwards."

As Tom Brokaw is sufficiently savvy to know this rule, his ostensible flaunting of it in so public an arena immediately raised a number of complicated questions. Was Brokaw implying that the M.E. of *Time* outranks the Anchor of NBC News? Did Brokaw believe that if he appeared to believe this, he could win points for modesty, or even for pretending to be modest? Was Brokaw so miffed at Isaacson's ability to go to even more parties than he does that he simply could not resist, rules or no rules? Only the anchorman knows for sure.

All this is probably too much for any novice to remember. That's why instead of trying to learn all the rules at once, it's better to just try to learn to think like a member of the media elite and hope the rest comes naturally. The key to success is to know your strengths and weaknesses. If you have what is unkindly known as "a face for radio," you are better off attempting to scale the greasy newspaper pole, rather than the magazine pole, where stylishness is much more at a premium.

Investigative reporting is another potential route to admittance, but quite a few news outlets tend to define it as knowing just when Robert Downey Jr. is getting out of rehab again, and how long before he'll be back. Given the explosion of the Internet and 24/7 cable TV, joining as a member of punditocracy has never been easier, witness the presence of Geraldo Rivera at Elaine's with the foul-mouthed leggy blonde bombshell Ann Coulter on his arm. Here again, however, you can't learn this stuff in journalism school. I doubt even Columbia has a class, for instance, on where to buy a leopard miniskirt or when it's appropriate to call the president and his wife "white trash" and when "pond scum" is more apt.

One area in which MetaMedia social life does mimic high school is that star quality is transitive. If you have cool friends, it makes you cool, too. If you marry a star, or sleep with one quite publicly, you become a star yourself. Best of all is to convince your movie star friend to allow you to play yourself in a big budget Hollywood flick, but having the star quote your sage opinions in *Vanity Fair* will do in a pinch.

Though it's an option open only to a select few, MM membership can be bought as well as earned. You don't even need to use your own money. Your dad can give you a newspaper. Your wife can spring for a small opinion magazine. Or your multinational conglomerate can decide it would like to add a network or two to its portfolio. It is highly unlikely that Mort Zuckerman would be invited to

pontificate on television about the Middle East and such things were he still just a real estate mogul — who had not hired himself to write a column in his own magazines. The problem with purchasing your status in the media elite is that it is revoked immediately after you leave the room. That's when real journalists demonstrate their contempt for filthy lucre by making fun of what you just said.

Yet another expensive way to upgrade your status in the media elite is to become a news story yourself. Matt Drudge is a genius at this, what with all his lawsuits and fake scoops and real scoops and inability to tell the difference, though his membership is clearly temporary. My fellow *Nation* columnist Christopher Hitchens has also demonstrated an impressive facility in this area, but not quite enough to challenge the field's reigning champion, Carl Bernstein. Most recently the major-league *New York Times* correspondent Adam Clymer was admitted into this tiny circle, though it's not clear he was pining for the honor.

Another useful talent is versatility. Most journalists are good at only what they're good at, be it TV, tabloid journalism, or *Timesese*. But the true greats like the late Murray Kempton, of *Newsday*, could go tabloid in the morning on the latest outrage in a Bronx courtroom and then bicycle across town after lunch to knock off a few thousand words on Cicero for *The New York Review*. Nobody alive can match Kempton's range, though it should be noted that the late Lars-Erik Nelson was doing a bang-up job on politics for both the *Daily News* and the *New York Review*. Print journalists who make it on TV are a dime a dozen, but the profession is always a bit in awe of TV guys who turn out to be smart enough to write books and essays on the side.

Here's a surprising discovery: it helps to be a nice person — or at least to appear to be a nice person — but only in the long run. In the short run you can get away with almost anything, because there are so many courtiers who want to rub up against you, and hostesses will want you at their parties. Hurtful insults will be considered clever bon mots and temper tantrums evidence of your "artistic temperament" so long as the going's good. Whereas if you are a genuinely kind, thoughtful person, you might be able to stretch a single moment in the sun into a lifetime of good tables at Elaine's or parties at George Plimpton's East River townhouse and possibly even

an entire career somewhere in *Time* or *Newsweek* — though these have admittedly become much rarer in recent years.

A final MetaMedia secret is that at the very top, at least, the meritocracy works. Hence the straightest path to the red-hot center is to be tremendously talented and to work extremely hard in the bargain. This combination is rarer than one would imagine. As they get older, talented people often deploy their gifts for the purpose of finding themselves well-paying, well-respected jobs that merely ensure that various media trains run on time.

The day Si Newhouse could not seem to make up his mind whom to hire to replace Tina Brown as editor of *The New Yorker* — the elite's crown jewel — turned out to be a red-letter day for merit. The owner's two finalists, David Remnick and Michael Kinsley, had next to nothing in common, either with one another or with their glamorous predecessor, Tina Brown. Remnick is both a reporter's reporter and a natural litterateur, whose light-handed profiles and heavily researched articles on Russia read like elegant novellas. Kinsley is the former boy-genius editor of *The New Republic* who does not even believe much in reporting and does not evidence much interest at all in literature. Yet his steel-trap mind and piercing dissection of the unexamined pieties of conventional wisdom

DINNER WITH VLADIMIR

When new Russian president Vladimir Putin made his first visit to New York last September 6, he was invited to dinner at "21" by Tom and Meredith Brokaw. Here's the elite guest list for that event, which didn't seem to have any impact on Putin's subsequently increasingly hostile actions toward the media.

MEREDITH BROKAW, author

TOM BROKAW, anchor and managing editor, NBC Nightly News

RICHARD COHEN, columnist, The Washington Post

KATIE COURIC, co-anchor, NBC's Today

MAUREEN DOWD, columnist, The New York Times

LEONARD DOWNIE, executive editor, The Washington Post

DON HEWITT, executive producer, 60 Minutes

JIM HOGE, editor, Foreign Affairs

WALTER ISAACSON, managing editor, Time

BOB KAISER, associate editor, The Washington Post

PETER KANN, publisher, The Wall Street Journal

ANDREW LACK, president, NBC News

JOE LELYVELD, executive editor, The New York Times

ANDREA MITCHELL, NBC's chief foreign affairs correspondent

MAUREEN ORTH, writer, Vanity Fair

PETER OSNOS, publisher and chief executive, PublicAffairs

HOWELL RAINES, editorial page editor, The New York Times

DAVID REMNICK, editor, The New Yorker

TIM RUSSERT, Washington bureau chief, NBC News

DIANE SAWYER, co-anchor, ABC's Good Morning America

RICK SMITH, chairman and editor in chief, Newsweek

have made his columns and articles the standard against which other pundits consistently fail to measure up.

Still, if you are looking for a representative MetaMedia figure, neither Kinsley nor Remnick will entirely do, as both are so talented as to make them inimitable. The other obvious choices, Brokaw and Isaac-

son, have surely reached the top of their respective greasy poles, but their victories are a bit narrowly defined.

My nomination for archetypal MetaMedia Man would be the old White Horse legend Pete Hamill. A journalist for all seasons, Hamill can go high, as a staff writer of *The New Yorker* and a biographer of Diego Garcia, and he can go low, as a columnist and briefly editor of both the *Post* and the *Daily News*. As for star quality, dating Shirley MacLaine and Jackie Kennedy (among many others), hanging with the Rat Pack, and playing a *Times* reporter in an Oscar-nominated movie more than qualify. Throw in a few well-reviewed novels, memoirs, a fat collection of essays, a stint as editor of a Mexican newspaper for seasoning, and some late philosophizing, as the doors close at Elaine's, on anything from Jackie Robinson to Jack Daniels, and you have your true Renaissance MetaMedia Man.

There's just one problem, Pete. Where were you for Tina's party at the Statue of Liberty?

This better be good... ■

Eric Alterman is the media columnist for The Nation, the "Cash Values" columnist for Worth, and an opinion columnist for MSNBC.com. A second edition of his Sound and Fury: The Making of the Punditocracy was published in 2000.

All in the mix...

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 28

Siegal, a fifty-something public relations princess who looks as glamorous as the people she entertains. She is paid by the major film companies to publicize the latest movies — to create buzz. And the way she does it is with screening parties, and with a list of potential guests that includes nearly every famous face in this city — from actors to newscasters. Her list includes roughly 1,000 members of the New York media establishment, divided into "On Cam" (to designate those on television) and "Media Elite" (though she notes that some are in both). And her categories have subcategories. "I'm supposed to

screen *Quills* for the literati and the media elite," she said in November. "But there's a clear difference between them. The media elite have much more of an immediate impact on society. The literati are like an intellectual boutique of the media elite."

Siegal knows exactly who the partygoers are and who the homebodies are. "My latest friends are the guys on CNBC's *Squawk Box*," she says. "They want to make the scene and they're doing it. Suddenly these guys are opinion-makers."

She says she realized several years ago that the media were worth inviting to glamorized events: "I picked up on this idea of the media elite early on. I needed to fill parties with faces, and since we don't have many movie stars who live here, I convinced the L.A. studios it was

important to have these media elite attend our events. The studios hire me to get faces — I need faces — and actors don't show up for someone else's movie. So I get news people. And not only are these faces smart, but they go back to their own audiences and talk about what they've seen."

Siegal traces the rise of the media elite to the onset of the information age, when e-mail, fax machines, and the Internet became assets. "There was a tremendous shift in social status in the city. As information became a commodity, great fortunes were being made. Those who delivered information started to become very important." ■

Lindsay Faber is a student at Columbia's Graduate School of Journalism.

WHY NEW YORK COULD RULE NEW MEDIA

BY DONNA LADD

The receptionist at *Inside.com*'s front desk is color-coordinated to the online magazine's spacious northern Chelsea loft. Her teeny, bright sea-green halter top conveniently shows off a prominent tattoo on her right shoulder, and it is a near-perfect match to a turquoise floor-to-ceiling tube-shaped room that is about twice as wide as her desk. What is it? "Oh, that's the conference room," she responds, between ladylike gum smacks.

This is not *The New York Times*. Its ambience is more typical of the new-media publishing ventures that sprouted in the Bay Area in the 1990s, back when the dot-com industry was still booming. But *Inside.com* is in New York, and thus far surviving, in the old-media capital of the world. Can Manhattan possibly become the twenty-first century new-media capital?

That's a question worthy of heated debate. But surprisingly, and to the chagrin of Internet purists, the answer could be yes. The reason is not because a plethora of independent new-media companies will choose Manhattan as their base. Rather, the corporate media already in place are primed to take over new media by virtue of their strengths in technology, content tradition, marketing skills, and deep pockets. Robert W. McChesney, a media critic and author of *Rich Media, Poor Democracy*, predicts that online news soon will belong to the "usual suspects," the media powerhouses. "The big boys have tremendous advantages. Only a fool would try to compete on the Internet at this point."

For example, because *The Wall Street Journal* is able to charge for access to most of its brand name reports, it has provided a second revenue stream that isn't dependent on a weak advertising market. ABC, meanwhile, can market its

Web site by having Peter Jennings point to it every evening on *World News Tonight*. And increasingly, the Goliaths can afford to buy up — or at least outlast — struggling Davids. "Bluntly, the existing media giants are making it virtually impossible for newcomers to use the Internet to get into the system," McChesney says.

McChesney views the merger of AOL and Time Warner as the final blow for small entrepreneurial news operations. "AOL is paying for market dominance. The power is in existing markets. It's a smart deal by



AOL," he says. AOL, of course, is relocating from Virginia to . . . New York.

Sitting in his round turquoise conference room and wearing a turtleneck sweater and tortoise-shell glasses, Kurt Andersen defends the chances of the little guys like himself. He and Michael Hirschorn launched *Inside.com* last spring and its print counterpart in December.

They still believe the Internet has changed the journalistic landscape forever. Hirschorn says antiquated media models are increasingly irrelevant in the 24/7 world. News must be immediate and interactive (and corrected instantaneously), and it can ignore geographic boundaries. "In order to compete as a brand, you now have to get your stuff to people the way they want to get it," he says. The problem is that having readers with more sophisticated interactive appetites doesn't always pay the bills, a pattern intensified by the dot-com slide. Still, *Inside.com* may do better than New York-based news ventures like *APBNews.com* and *Pseudo.com*, now archival shells of their former ambitions.

The parent company of *Feed* magazine (feedmag.com), Automatic Media,

is one New York company publishing cutting-edge content online. In January, funded by Advance Publications, it launched *Plastic.com*, a pop culture site drawing content from *Wired News*, *Spin*, *Inside.com*, *The New Republic*, and others. It's creating a buzz, although the *Pseudo* founders well know that buzz doesn't cover the rent.

The New York landscape can also be hard ground for Internet trade magazines. Two homegrown glossies covering the Silicon Alley dot-com industry, *Silicon Alley Reporter* and the more cheerleader-ish *AlleyCat News*, are both still afloat, although *Alley* ads are now a harder sell. Interestingly, neither has bothered with a strong online presence. "The Web just doesn't make money," says *Silicon Alley Reporter*'s publisher, Jason McCabe Calacanis.

And then there are the giants, lurking everywhere. Finalists for the first Online Journalism Awards last November included *ABCNews.com*, *MSNBC.com*, and *WSJ.com*. "By and large, it's the same big boys who dominate offline media who are dominating online as well," says *Salon* founder David Talbot. *Salon* and *MSNBC.com* won the "general excellence" awards in their respective categories — "original to the Web" and "in collaboration with another medium."

Salon was an obvious choice. Indeed, there's something magical about its successful beat-Goliath journalism, and it draws respect for surviving last year's Nasdaq crash, even if it had to cut its staff 20 percent. "I launched *Salon* for \$2 million in 1995," says Talbot, who still predicts profitability for the company. "It would take five or six times that now. At some point the revolutionary rhetoric is eclipsed by the harsh light of reality, often by economic forces. Distribution, production, and labor costs were higher than projected. And aggressive marketing is imperative. Just cutting through the noise on the Internet and in the media in general takes marketing clout." Showing up and looking irreverent isn't enough. And "you need a talented editorial staff making headlines, not two or three amateurs."

Who can pay for that talent and expertise? Media powerhouses, whether we like it or not. And they're in New York. ■

Donna Ladd, who writes for The Village Voice, Salon, and other publications, is a student at Columbia's Graduate School of Journalism.

MARKET DRIVEN

The (Liberal) Media Elite Have Acquired a New Tilt

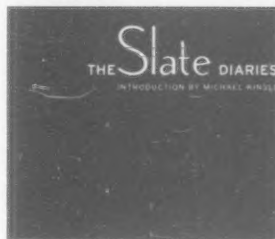
BY MICHAEL MASSING

One night in mid-November, several dozen journalists gathered in the Tribeca loft of the writer Jacob Weisberg to celebrate the publication of *The Slate Diaries*, a collection of journal entries by assorted contributors to the online magazine. Among those in attendance were Michael Kinsley, the editor of *Slate* and a columnist for *The Washington Post*; Hendrik Hertzberg, a staff writer for *The New Yorker*; John Tierney, a columnist for *The New York Times*; Jonathan Alter, a senior editor at *Newsweek*; Philip Weiss, a columnist for *The New York Observer*; Michael Hirschorn, the editor of *Inside.com*, a Web site about the media world; and Mickey Kaus, a contributor to *Slate*. As the guests nibbled on chicken sate and sushi rolls, they marveled at the apartment, with its immense living room, soaring ceilings, staircase leading to the second floor, and balcony overlooking the first. Weisberg, *Slate*'s chief political correspondent and a contributing writer at *The New York Times Magazine*, and his wife, Deborah Needleman, an editor at large at *House & Garden*, had moved in just a few weeks earlier. At the party there was much speculation as to how much of the purchase price had been covered by Weisberg's recent deal to write the memoir of Robert Rubin, for which the former treasury secretary was to receive a \$3.3 million advance from Random House.

My first thought on hearing of the reception was, Why wasn't I invited? In the New York media world, attendance at such events is a good measure of one's status, and so I naturally felt mortified by my absence. On the other hand, had I attended the event, I would have been less inclined to write about it in connection with the

New York media elite. Those who actually belong to that elite generally don't like to acknowledge its existence, much less its influence.

Consider, for instance, the case of Randall Rothenberg. A columnist for *Advertising Age* and a former editorial director at *Esquire*, Rothenberg would seem a card-carrying member of the New York media elite. But after appearing as a guest speaker on the subject at the Columbia Graduate School of Journalism, he wrote a column pooh-poohing the whole idea. If there ever was such an elite, "it's dying," he wrote, and "New York itself is losing whatever primacy it once held." The cause, Rothenberg argued, was the rise of the new communications technology, which, by fragmenting the media's audience, and the media themselves, had weakened the influence of individuals over content. Today, he went on, the New York media elite "are not leading anything. They are responding to sly humor from *The Onion* in Madison, Wisconsin; to politics-and-sex dished out by *Salon* in San Francisco; to clannish gossip, assembled by Romenesko



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OF ABORTION,
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HOT-BUTTON
ISSUES OF THE
CULTURE WARS.'**

in Minnesota; to Hollywood box scores, tallied by *Aintitcoolnews.com* in Austin, to TV. And those who say otherwise... are eliting you down the garden path."

Sorry, Randy, but you've been spending too much time online. Yes, plenty of journalists have bookmarked those sites, but this winter the cash-strapped *Salon* had to lay off staff, again, and Jim Romenesko's site is little more than a clipping service of established news organizations. And, since Rothenberg's column appeared, *The Onion* has decided to move its headquarters from Madison to, yes, New York, which, its publisher explained, is "the best place to create the funniest stuff and find the best comedy writers." With media dot-coms folding by the dozen, and with AOL's recent merger with Time Warner, surely the big news about the Internet is the growing consolidation taking place there. In a recent article in *The New York Review of Books*, James Fallows convincingly

argued that most of the grand pronouncements made about how the Internet was going to transform life in Ameri-

ca have proved overblown, and I think this applies to the great democratization foretold for the news media.

In fact, a strong case can be made that the New York media elite — buoyed by the boom on Wall Street — are more powerful than ever. They are, however, a transformed elite. For that same Wall Street boom has caused some fundamental changes in the ideology of New York journalists and how they cover the world. All through the 1990s, after all, the stock market has been the center of the universe, and the New York media have felt its gravitational pull from very close range.

There was once a time when the power of the New York media elite was on the wane — in the 1980s. The Reagan Revolution was rising, the Rust Belt was corroding, and New York, like many cities, was reeling from the twin plagues of crack and crime. In TV news, the top innovator was CNN, based in Atlanta, while *USA Today*, in Arlington, Virginia, was striving to become “the nation’s newspaper.” Meanwhile, Washington was emerging as the nation’s new intellectual center, a development symbolized by Irving Kristol’s decision to move there from New York. “NYC, RIP?” *The New Republic* gloated on its cover in 1988. In those days, *TNR* was a must read among the literati, and Washington’s Cokie Roberts was TV’s “it” girl.

Today, the Washington media elite — their reputation dimmed by shoddy performance during the Monica affair and by the endless squawk of all those capital-gang talk shows — seem to have lost some of their luster. And as New York City has rebounded, so, too, has New York’s news industry. The struggling CNN has been absorbed into Time Warner, and the dynamism in cable news has shifted to the Fox News Channel, based in Manhattan, and MSNBC, in nearby New Jersey. Time Warner is building a new headquarters in Columbus Circle, and Reuters is matching it in Times Square. Condé Nast has already moved into its own Times Square tower, featuring a seven-story-high NASDAQ video sign and a swank cafeteria designed by Frank Gehry. The Times Square news zipper, meanwhile, is operated by Dow Jones, publisher of *The Wall Street Journal*, the nation’s top provider of financial and economic news.

The organization that gave Times Square its name is planning to shift to plusher digs on Eighth Avenue. While changing location, though, *The New*

TRAVEL

James, Bring Me the Cell Phone

London's Lanesborough Hotel Offers British Grandeur, With Texas Technology

By LAURA LANDRO
Staff Reporter of THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

ARRIVING at the Lanesborough Hotel in London feels a lot like stepping into a movie set titled “Grand Old London.” Elegantly dressed doormen in dove-gray morning suits and bowler hats usher you through the imposing arched entry into an elegant, sweeping marble lobby warmed by a crackling fireplace. A proper,



THE FINICKY TRAVELER

elegant Englishwoman sits you down to discreetly check in, and footmen and butlers await your beck and call.

Actually, this is Old London by way of Texas, but it is more British than the fish. Formerly St. George's Hospital, "moose" neoclassical building was into a luxury hotel a decade ago. The Hunt of the Dallas-based Group. From the day it was snuffed at coming to replace grandeur—with such as million

London Chic

Who needs a tiny boutique hotel? London's larger, landmark hotels are doing brisk business with a mixture of old and new services, but be sure to bring a wallet. Below, some examples:

York Times will retain its undisputed status as the nation's top news organization. Under Joe Lelyveld, the paper, with twenty-nine foreign bureaus, a crack national team, unmatched cultural coverage, and a nimble satellite printing system that allows it same-day delivery across the United States, dominates the national news chain like never before. Its front page — the bulletin board for the eastern establishment — is able to force a story onto the national agenda like no other space. Just ask Wen Ho Lee.

Well, you might ask, so what? What difference does it make to the average news consumer that New York is home to so many top news organizations? It means, first of all, that the city, and events occurring there, get special treatment. Would *Newsweek* have put the Yankee-Met World Series on its cover had it been based in Chicago?

By the same token, the media's New York-centricity means that some important stories get neglected. Because the city is so highly urbanized and so well served by mass transit, for instance, issues affecting suburbia, such as sprawl and traffic congestion, tend to get short-changed. Similarly, the huge influx of Mexicans to the U.S., so visible in the west, has been neglected. Jews, heavily concentrated in New York, get more space than their numbers would seem to warrant, at least in *The New York Times*, where no minyan in the world seems too small to write about.

Such parochialism, however galling to Americans west of the Hudson, is but one effect that the New York setting has on the journalism that is produced there. Traditionally, the main charge leveled against the eastern media elite is that they have a liberal bias. This complaint dates back to the days of Nixon and Agnew, but it was first fully catalogued in 1986, when Robert Lichter, Stanley Rothman, and Linda Lichter came out with their book *The Media Elite*. Most journalists vehemently reject the notion of bias. A “stale stereotype” is how many feel about the label, Howard Kurtz wrote in *The Washington Post* last September. Kurtz noted how tough the press has been on Bill Clinton. Others have pointed to the rough treatment Al Gore got in the course of his campaign. Yet a presidential campaign seems a less-than-ideal occasion for evaluating bias in the media. A more reliable test, I think, is the day-to-day coverage of controversial issues. And here, I think, it's undeniable that the press does list to the left.

Take, for example, the death penalty. In recent months, national news organizations have produced a flood of stories questioning how the death penalty is administered in this country. These accounts have documented the poor legal representation available to death-row inmates, the extra-harsh treatment minorities generally receive, and, most dramatically, the growing number of inno-

cent people who have been condemned to death. As an opponent of capital punishment, I applaud such stories. Yet I also believe that they lean toward one side of the issue, and that the coverage would be enhanced if more attention were paid to, say, the families of murder victims and the ordeal they must endure.

Similarly, in the case of gun control, the press has run countless stories on the lax regulation of gun shows, the ease with which criminals can get firearms, and the political clout of the National Rifle Association. Comparatively few articles have probed the tactics of Handgun Control or explored the argument that allowing citizens to carry concealed weapons can deter crime. Does every member of the media think this way? Of course not. But there is a prevalent mindset that reinforces itself through peer and social pressure. This would be true anywhere, but it is magnified by the concentration and intensity of media life in New York. A similar elite slant can be detected, I think, in the coverage of abortion, gay rights, the environment, affirmative action, school prayer, and the other hot-button issues of the culture wars.

But that's only half the story. The other half concerns economic issues. And here, I think, elite journalists have increasingly come under the sway of the markets. They're not alone, of course. The boom on Wall Street has turned factory workers into investors, c.e.o.s into heroes, and logos into icons. Still, the market fever has been particularly intense in New York, and this has affected the media elite in numerous ways.

Most immediately, the rise in the Dow has boosted the living standards of many journalists. In Manhattan newsrooms, reporters and editors regularly click onto the Web to see how their portfolios are doing. They subscribe to *Saveur*, drink fine wines, and vacation in Europe. "I hear more talk at literary cocktail parties about Michael Eisner's stock options than about the new Don DeLillo," James Atlas observed in a notorious 1998 *New Yorker* article. In it, he complained about his financial state despite owning a summer home in Vermont and a comfortable apartment in Manhattan and sending his son to private school. "You never have enough," a successful writer tells Atlas, who confesses his longing for a Range Rover.

Such material preoccupations are reflected on the life-style pages of the nations' newspapers and magazines. The *Wall Street Journal's* "Weekend Journal"

section, for instance, reads increasingly like *Town & Country*. A travel column on landmark hotels in London described how, at the Lanesborough, "elegantly dressed doormen in dove-gray morning suits and bowler hats usher you through the imposing arched entry into an elegant, sweeping marble lobby warmed by a crackling fireplace." Rooms at the hotel range in price from \$360 to \$5,700 a night.

The frenzy on Wall Street has further fed an explosion in business coverage, most of it reported from the perspective of investors. Newsstands brim with new publications like *Fast Company* and *Smart Money*, *Forbes* ASAP and *The Daily Deal*. David Denby, who in 1996 came out with *Great Books*, a loving look at the Western literary canon, is now writing a book about investment, technology, and greed. In *The New Yorker* last year he wrote, "I have decided that I want — I need — to make a million dollars in the stock market this year." Even Eric Alterman, media critic for the left-leaning *Nation* magazine, has begun writing a column (called "Cash Values") for *Worth* magazine.

ELITE JOURNALISTS HAVE INCREASINGLY COME UNDER THE SWAY OF THE MARKETS. OBSESSION WITH THE INTERNET HAS HEIGHTENED THIS INFATUATION

If the market has become the center of the universe, the "new economy" has, at least until recently, been the center of the markets, and the media's coverage of it has suffered from irrational exuberance. In 2000, for instance, *The New Yorker* published two special "Digital Age" issues (this in addition to a "Money" issue). On Mondays, *The New York Times* devotes its Business Day section to "The Information Industries," and no new-media Web site seems too small or insignificant to merit coverage. *Fortune* magazine, that Lucean model of sober business reporting, has essentially remade itself into a hip high-tech organ, the better to compete with such ad-thick hatchlings as *The Industry Standard*, *Red Herring*, and *Business 2.0*, all

of which focus on the business of the Internet.

In many respects, the emphasis on the Internet seems natural. The rise (and partial decline) of a powerful new communications technology is significant and makes for good copy. But the sheer quantity of the coverage, and its often-breathless tone, suggests that other factors are at work. For one thing, media coverage of the Internet no doubt helps attract all those new-economy ads that have been fattening so many publications. Another factor is the personal stake that many New York journalists have come to have in the Internet.

In the early 1990s, when the Internet was just emerging, most elite journalists saw it as a threat. The new economy was based in the west, in Silicon Valley and Seattle, and it was staffed by technogeeks laboring away on abstruse software packages. The leading tribune of this world was *Wired*, which, with its staunch libertarianism, nerve-jangling graphics, and prophetic tone, grated on eastern sensibilities. As the Internet took off, however, and the need for content grew, its center of gravity shifted east, and the New York-based journalists began to sense its possibilities. A key moment came in 1997, when Jim Cramer, the investment and financial writer, started *TheStreet.com*, an insider's guide to the markets. In the early flush of the dot-com surge, it did staggeringly well. And, in the few years since, the media elite have progressively colonized the Net.

Consider that reception for *The Slate Diaries*: *Slate*, of course, is distributed online. Though it's based outside Seattle, many of its writers live in New York, and their salaries are paid for by *Slate's* owner, Microsoft. Microsoft, in turn, is co-owner (along with NBC) of MSNBC. Some of the guests at the party contribute to MSNBC.com. Meanwhile, Michael Hirschorn, a veteran New York editor, has joined with Kurt Andersen (formerly of *Time*, *Spy*, and *The New Yorker*) to launch *Inside.com*, the one-stop Internet site for news and gossip about the media world. Mickey Kaus, formerly a writer for *The New Republic*, has started his own Web site, *kausfiles.com*, on which he posts his political musings; the liveliest of them are picked up by *Slate*. And so on.

In covering the Internet, then, New York journalists are often writing about their own world. And, not surprisingly, their appetite for detail seems boundless. A good example occurred in late November, when *The New York Times*, in Business

Day, ran a long takeout on the future of the e-book. As the writer, David D. Kirkpatrick, noted in his lead, the e-book seems a long way from becoming a reality. "Few people have ever read a whole book on a screen," he wrote. "No one knows how many people will ever want to." The one independent analyst cited in the piece said that consumer research "indicates very little interest in reading on a screen." This, however, did not keep Kirkpatrick from devoting 3,500 words to the subject, most of them relaying in minute detail the machinations of various New York authors, publishers, and agents.

Overall, from the amount of media coverage the new economy has received, you'd think that it accounts for a large portion of the nation's GDP. In fact, according to a report issued last summer by the U.S. Department of Commerce, IT (information technology) industries "still account for a relatively small share of the economy's total output — an estimated 8.3 percent in 2000." As of 1998, those industries employed only 6.1 percent of American workers. And despite all the stories about Amazon, e-Bay, and the rest, online retail sales make up less than one percent of all retail sales in the United States.

In short, the media's e-mania has produced a skewed picture of the U.S. economy. But the distorting effects of its obsession go deeper. In the process of writing about digital start-ups and IPOs, Cisco and Oracle and the rest, journalists have become increasingly enthralled with entrepreneurship, deal-making, and the free-market system in general, to an extent that makes tough and clear-eyed analysis difficult.

Consider, for example, the career of Michael Lewis. In 1989, Lewis made a name for himself with *Liar's Poker*, a biting send-up of the greed on Wall Street based on his experience as a bond trader for Salomon Brothers. "The American financial system," Lewis wrote, had become "wild, reckless, and deeply in hock." Ten years later, Lewis came out with *The New Thing*, a profile of Jim Clark, the founder of Netscape, and it is full of wonder — at Clark's restless mind, his multi-billion-dollar fortune, and the Silicon Valley culture that nurtured him. "The business of creating and foisting new technology upon others that goes on in Silicon Valley is near the core of the American experience," Lewis writes. "Silicon



con Valley is to the United States what the United States is to the rest of the world. It is one of those places, unlike the Metropolitan Museum of Art, but like Las Vegas, that are unimaginable anywhere but in the United States. It is distinctively us."

Or consider Jacob Weisberg — the host of that loft party and one of the nation's top political writers — and his agreement to write the memoir of Robert Rubin. He is not writing about Rubin, keep in mind, but *with* him. Jacob (a friend of mine) says that his arrangement with Rubin "is not atypical of the relations that journalists have with public figures from time to time. And it's a one-time thing. A case can't be made that this represents a softening on my part." No doubt Weisberg will continue to produce incisive journalism, but I don't see how his new partnership can help but affect the way he writes about subjects like the world economy, of which Rubin is an architect.

Even without money being exchanged, most journalists have been gushing in their coverage of the former treasury secretary. While Rubin and other economic policymakers do deserve some credit for the percolating U.S. economy, journalists — mesmerized by the Dow — seem to have lost their ability to scrutinize their actions with the necessary skepticism.

A good example is the cover story *Time* ran on February 15, 1999. Titled "THE THREE MARKETEERS," it looked at how

Rubin, Fed chairman Alan Greenspan, and deputy treasury secretary Lawrence Summers had responded to the Asian financial crisis of 1997-1998. By then, many financial analysts had concluded that the Clinton administration had made several key blunders in responding to the crisis, aggravating its severity. *Time* glossed this over, offering a single paragraph halfway through that laid the blame solely at the door of the International Monetary Fund. It cast the three U.S. officials as "economist heroes" and "the committee to save the world." Correspondent Joshua Cooper Ramo wrote:

What holds them together is a passion for thinking and an inextinguishable curiosity about a new economic order that is unfolding before them like an Alice in Wonderland world. The sheer fascination of inventing a 21st century financial system motivates them more than the usual Washington drugs of power and money. In the past six years the three men have merged into a kind of brotherhood, with an easy rapport.

The three officials, Ramo went on, "have outgrown ideology. Their faith is in the markets and in their own ability to analyze them." This inability to recognize that putting such faith in the markets is itself a form of ideology shows the extent to which the boom on Wall Street has dulled the media's analytic ability.

This failure is nowhere more apparent than in the coverage of the developing world, or "emerging markets," as journalists (following the lead of Wall Street) like to call them. When Bill Clinton visited Vietnam in mid-November, for instance, *The New York Times* ran a series of background pieces. Vietnam is an overwhelmingly rural society with a per capita income of \$370 a year, but the *Times* pieces tended to focus on a narrow, privileged slice of urban society. NASCENT INTERNET TAKES ROOT IN VIETNAM, ran the headline over one of them, about an entrepreneur's efforts to market the Internet in Vietnam (even though a mere 100,000 of its 79 million residents have access to it). Accompanying the piece was a photo of a beautiful young woman demonstrating the Internet to a group of eager youths at a communications fair in Hanoi.

ABC's *World News Tonight* began its own background piece with a clip of another beautiful woman, a worker singing a revolutionary anthem. The segment then cut to a disco, where a group of beautiful people was shaking it up on the dance floor.

The World

Vietnam's Youth Stage A Gentler Revolution

By SETH MYDANS

CAREFREE, war-free, with multicolored sparkles in their hair, Vietnam's young people are leading a revolution in Vietnam today, and it's not a Communist one.

It is a revolution of creeping globalization, and as in communist lore, there is a small but very influential vanguard in the vanguard. When President Clinton visited Vietnam—the first American president to do so—25 years ago—

ACNielsen company has an insight to offer.

"This is the first generation in Vietnam to experience a true youth culture, with shared values, identity, symbols and language," said Gordon Milne, an ACNielsen executive who has collated interviews with hundreds of young people. "In the past," he said, "you as a teenager were basically a young old person. Same beliefs. Same values. Now we are seeing a set of young people whose expectations, lifestyle and behavior are more and more different from their parents."

Advertisers beware, he said. The young are becoming savvy consumers. It is no longer enough simply to offer a foreign product. They want quality. They want brand names. They want whatever it is that young people want in other countries.

But they are still learning. Compared with other nations, Mr. Milne said, "we are talking about 20 years difference in terms of youth culture." The youth revolution in Vietnam is still hesitant. The youth revolution in Vietnam is still hesitant. The youth revolution in Vietnam is still hesitant.

"You can still find a few young Vietnamese performing the old revolutionary songs," correspondent Mark Litke declared, "but when the uniforms come off, Vietnam's post-war generation rocks to a very American beat." From the disco, Litke took us to a Nike factory outside Ho Chi Minh City, where we were shown around by a company executive. The pay at the factory is only \$50 a month but, Litke hastened to note, that is well above the national average. "These jobs are extremely attractive," the Nike official assures us.

Perhaps the workers at the Nike plant do like their jobs. We can't say for sure, however, since we never hear from any of them. Certainly Nike's presence overseas has been controversial, with many questions raised about the working conditions at its factories. Taking us inside that debate, however, would have required stepping outside the box and looking searchingly at the impact of global capitalism on Vietnam, but that is something Litke (like the *Times* correspondents) seemed reluctant to do.

It's important not to overstate this. National news organizations, led by the *Times*, the *Journal*, and the *Washington Post*, continue to offer much incisive reporting on such issues as human rights abuses, environmental degradation, and the crushing effects of third-world poverty. At home, too, these newspapers have attempted to afflict the comfortable with accounts of the millions of Americans who have been left behind by the boom. But these stories can get lost amid all the hoopla over the market and the Internet, luxury hotel suites and \$400 shoes.

On the same day that the *Times* offered its endless account about the future of the e-book, for instance, it ran a brief AP item about a rally in Seoul, South Korea, at which thousands of workers protested corporate reorganization plans that they

feared would lead to sweeping layoffs. Only 138 words long, the article offered no further explanation. Looking up the original AP story on Nexis, I discovered that the rally had been called in support of workers at the state-run power company, which the government planned to break into several units and sell off — part of a broader effort to shut down or sell fifty-two companies. "The

'THE TIMES' PIECES TENDED TO FOCUS ON A NARROW PRIVILEGED SLICE OF VIETNAMESE SOCIETY'

move shocked tens of thousands of workers who work for those and other financially shaky companies," the AP reported. The policy, it added, resulted from government promises to the IMF to restructure its finances in return for a \$58 billion bailout loan. Caught up in the struggles of the electronic book, the *Times* found none of this fit to print.

As a result of such priorities, the media elite are muffing what is perhaps the biggest story of the day: globalization. The growing integration of the world economy, the dismantling of international trade barriers, the blink-of-an-eye flow of capital between countries, the rapid technological changes that are everywhere creating new classes of winners and losers — U.S. news organizations have done a poor



The vanguard of the new revolution hangs out outside a night club in Ho Chi Minh City.

cess, satellite TV, fashion shows. We can try anything." Like others with the money to go to a disco (many of them the children of the Communist elite) she was sensitive about her privilege, asserting her solidarity with the majority of Vietnamese who are poor.

ACNielsen acknowledged that based on a tiny slice of the population, it extends the

most important thing to focus on," Miss Hong said. "Now people in my generation don't care so much about it. We focus on music, fashion, making friends and going on picnics. My parents and their friends grew up in war so they couldn't pay more attention to music or other habits, although they liked them. Now we're at peace and if we want to we can learn about all fields in life. Perhaps more than their counterparts abroad, they know the sacrifices they are constantly being told the

job of explaining it all. During the past election, probably few elite journalists voted for George Bush, but probably even fewer voted for Ralph Nader or at least listened to his complaints about the direction of the new global order. And this is reflected in the coverage. The press may be biased in favor of abortion rights, gun control, and affirmative action, but it's also partial to Dow Jones, Goldman Sachs, and Robert Rubin.

But there are some signs of hope. With the recent troubles in the market, some small cracks are beginning to appear in the media's bond to Wall Street. All these assumptions about the glamour of the new economy, the sclerosis of the old, and the virtues of untrammelled capitalism are being called into question. ENTREPRENEURS' "GOLDEN AGE" IS FADING IN ECONOMIC BOOM, *The New York Times* declared on its front page in early December, atop a story noting that, despite all the hoopla about the growth of entrepreneurship in the United States, the number of self-employed Americans outside agriculture had actually declined between 1994 and 1999, the first five-year span in which that had occurred since the 1960s. Here and there, other such pointed analyses are beginning to appear. Are the media elite perhaps heading for their own market correction? ■

Michael Massing is a contributing editor to *CIR*. He is the author of *The Fix*, about America's drug war, published in paperback last year.

NEW YORK TIMES/CHANG W. LEE

PLAYERS ONLY

Where Media and Foreign Policy Elites Talk Geopolitics

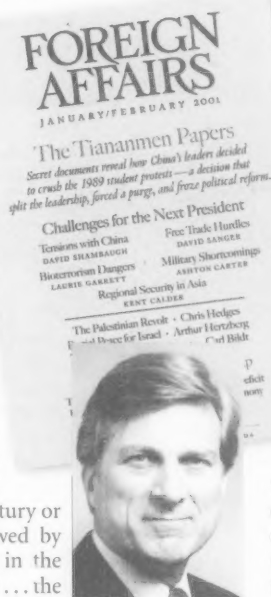
BY CAMILLE FINEFROCK

Almost every student of the liberal arts has seen, at one time or another, a reproduction of Raphael's great painting, the *School of Athens*. Depicted there are the profound thinkers of ancient Greece. Aristotle and Plato stroll arm in arm through a crowd of learned guests, including Socrates and Herclitus, Euclid, and Ptolemy. Men of consequence mill about, engaged in the scholarly debate of things both eternal and immediate.

And from Athens, the tide of time carries the center of civilization westward, alighting for a century or two in Rome, then Paris, followed by London, until it comes to rest, in the American Century, in Manhattan... the corner of Park Avenue and Sixty-Eighth Street to be exact. Or so it seems from some perspectives.

For here stands The Council on Foreign Relations, a private think tank founded in 1921 by the grandfathers of the Eastern Establishment to foster discussion about international affairs. The council's 3,800 members are people of influence. Diplomats, academics, and politicians gather together here in off-the-record meetings to discuss and develop the economic and social policies that shape the world. The council is also the intersection of the foreign policy and media elite. Its current president, Leslie Gelb, is a former journalist, and journalists make up a part of the membership.

Housed within its walls are the offices of *Foreign Affairs*, the official though autonomous publication of the council. As the century turns, the magazine's imposing facade is crumbling a bit, under the heavy weather of competition, and as the council itself deals with the end of the cold war and the rise of globalism.



Editor James Hoge

The backdrop is notable. Here Henry Kissinger, while a young professor at Harvard, took his first steps into the world of foreign policy with his article "Reflections on American Diplomacy" and later wrote about Vietnam as secretary of state.

Here George Kennan,

writing in 1947 under the mysterious pseudonym "X," espoused the theory of Soviet containment that would be practiced by U.S.

administrations until the end of the cold war. The January issue maintains the grand tradition with the publication of "The Tiananmen Papers," an excerpt of the book by the same name, which is a compilation of internal Chinese government memos that document the decision to quash the 1989 demonstrations in Tiananmen Square.

The names of the published read like a Who's Who of twentieth century foreign policy: Vladimir Lenin, Victor Chernov, Walter Lippmann, Isaiah Berlin, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., William F. Buckley, Jr., Richard Holbrooke, and now Zhang Liang, the pseudonym of the compiler of "The Tiananmen Papers."

Foreign Affairs reached its zenith of power during the early years of the cold war when the communist/capitalist dichotomy created a world in which it was easier for one popular national view of foreign policy to dominate. *Foreign Affairs* was, without question, the voice of the elite Ivy League ruling class in those

years. Government officials used it as a big megaphone to disseminate ideas to the public. But there are more megaphones now, and a more diverse set of voices competing to be heard. "Nothing is as important as it was in the forties and fifties because there are so many more outlets," says Fareed Zakaria, the thirty-six-year-old former managing editor of *Foreign Affairs*, now managing editor of *Newsweek International*. "There is much more competition at every level—that is the real change." Given its history, it comes as no surprise that publishing in *Foreign Affairs* is still the best way to be baptized as a foreign policy player, but its power to set the international affairs agenda is less certain.

James Hoge, formerly a publisher of the *New York Daily News* and editor of the *Chicago Sun-Times*, took over the editorship of the journal in 1992. Early on, to ease tensions about his tabloid background, he presented the council with a phony prototype. "It was pink," he says, "and instead of the little horse"—the magazine's horse-and-rider emblem—"I had Cindy Crawford's picture. Then I had a table of contents that was really quite scandalous, including a gossip column by Liz Smith on international affairs, and it helped ease things a bit." Liz Smith didn't make it, but Hoge is credited with adding younger voices and going beyond geopolitics, running articles on such topics as world economics and culture.

He has had to deal with a lot of journals that have populated the foreign policy landscape over the last thirty years: *World Policy Journal*, *Foreign Policy*, *The National Interest*, not to mention the annual publications distributed by think tanks and institutes. *Foreign Affairs* still has the largest circulation of all of these, weighing in at 110,000, plus non-English editions. *Foreign Policy*, which relaunched in August 2000, hopes to get close to that in circulation, but has a way to go in terms of influence. *World Policy Journal*,

considered to be the real intellectual competition for *Foreign Affairs*, has a circulation of just 4,000.

But though *Foreign Affairs* has a bigger footprint than its competitors, the trails that those competitors blazed have influenced its evolution, *World Policy Journal* perhaps most of all. A recent study by the Congressional Research Service, commissioned by Congress, found that of the forty-three most influential foreign policy articles published since the end of the cold war, nine were published in *World Policy Journal*, followed by *Foreign Affairs* with seven. *World Policy Journal* managed this feat with considerably fewer resources than *Foreign Affairs*.

The weakening of *Foreign Affairs*'s monopoly on international affairs commentary can be traced back to the volatile Vietnam years. "The foreign policy establishment, which had been in agreement over containment, split over Vietnam," says James Chace, managing editor of *Foreign Affairs* from 1969 to 1983 and, until recently, the editor of *World Policy Journal*. "The magazine had been slow to entertain any serious criticism of the war. It was perceived as missing the boat." David Halberstam, the author and journalist, agrees with Chace's assessment. He and others, disgruntled with the hesitance on the part of the editors of *Foreign Affairs* to publish any criticism of U.S. involvement in the war, founded *Foreign Policy* as a journal for alternative views.

The current editors tout *Foreign Policy* as a home for "jargon-free writing" that is informative enough to shrink the pile of "guilt reading" that burdens the concerned internationalist. Especially the pile of what Chace calls "statesman" articles — pieces by government officials, which were both the strength and the weakness of *Foreign Affairs*. They were a strength, according to Chace, because the "quasi-authoritative statements" of secretaries of state and foreign dignitaries lent the journal its authority. And a weakness because they could be rather dull. When he went over to *World Policy Journal*, Chace says he printed more journalists and scholars.

An analysis of *Foreign Affairs* and *World Policy Journal* from the year 2000 shows that *World Policy Journal* does run a higher percentage of articles by journalists, and *Foreign Affairs* does run more "statesman" articles. But it runs fewer than it did in the cold war years. According to Zakaria, he and Hoge spent part of their first years at the magazine delicately telling current

government officials that, no, their articles were not accepted for the next issue.

Zakaria makes a distinction between those articles that come from former government officials and those that come from current government officials. Those authored by the latter, he says, tend to be dry because an official government position usually prevents them from saying anything interesting. But of former officials, he said, "You'd be a fool not to want such articles. People are in government for good reason — they are very intelligent. Government gives you a unique perspective on international affairs."

"The Tiananmen Papers" certainly provide such a unique perspective. Why did *Foreign Affairs* get the Tiananmen scoop instead of other journals? It has something to do with the magazine's readers. According to a survey conducted biannually by Erdos and Morgan — which surveys 354,000 "opinion leaders" about what publications they read — about 14 percent of those polled said that *Foreign Affairs* influences what they think about international affairs, about the same percentage that listed *The New Republic*.

Foreign Affairs does not have the resources to compete with the likes of *The New Yorker* or *The New York Times* (cited as influential by 60 percent of those polled by Erdos and Morgan) for the ground reportage that would make the journal newsworthy. Zakaria concedes that *Foreign Affairs* cannot compete with the "magazination of the daily newspaper." Hoge sees *Foreign Affairs* as more of a "trickle-down mechanism." Trickle where? In large measure to *The New York Times* and overseas newspapers.

The excerpts of the Tiananmen books, for example, were released to both the *Times* and *Foreign Affairs*, according to the book's publisher, Peter Osnos of PublicAffairs. The *Times* published a front-page story and a portion of the excerpts the day before *Foreign Affairs* was published and *The Tiananmen Papers* book

was released. *Foreign Affairs* did not scoop the *Times*, as it might have thirty years ago. Both publications served as public relations extensions of PublicAffairs.

Perhaps the realm in which *Foreign Affairs* is most clearly influential is overseas. The journal has launched a number of foreign-language editions, and non-U.S. readership has doubled since the early '90s, according to publisher David Kellogg. In China, Hoge says, students are accessing "The Tiananmen Papers" through the Web.

Did the clout that *Foreign Affairs* carries attract the publisher of *The Tiananmen Papers*? Gene Taft of PublicAffairs says the company approached Hoge because publishing the "Papers" in *Foreign Affairs* would lend credibility, as there had been some debate about the authenticity of the Tiananmen papers. And Osnos adds, "The major fact of life is that there are so many sources of information. But to the extent that any journal can be the main voice, *Foreign Affairs* is it. It is the most established."

But there was another factor. When first asked why he chose *Foreign Affairs* over other journals,

Osnos said "Jim Hoge and I are good friends." Which gives a backstage glimpse of why *Foreign Affairs* stays "the most influential periodical in print," as it calls itself — the journal is still a main arm of what we might still call the Eastern Establishment.

Hoge fidgets when asked about the term. It's not the right term, he says. Establishment smacks of success bestowed by the happy coincidence of lineage, rather than merit. He prefers "elite." "There's a class almost, a political class that people coming into the field want to be recognized by. If you have the credentials, you can be there."

"There are still coagulations of power," he says, after a pause, "and there always will be." ■

Camille Finefrock, a former public school teacher, is a student at Columbia's Graduate School of Journalism.



SNAPSHOTS

Brief portraits of five New York media figures, developed out of the Columbia Graduate School of Journalism's "New York media elite" class and written by students in the class

'It's easier for women these days — but it's not easy'



CATHIE BLACK became first woman publisher of a weekly consumer magazine, *New York*, in 1979.

CATHIE BLACK When Cathleen Black entered room 607B at Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism, she smiled graciously and took her seat, careful not to interrupt the class's conversation about the social habits of the New York media. Black expressed interest in hearing what the students had to say, nodding as they spoke. Yes, there is a media establishment, she finally said, and yes, they do socialize: "I was just at The Pierre for lunch today."

"There is a gigantic concentration of brilliantly talented people in this city in particular, who do kind of set the agenda for the country," she said.

At Hearst, where she oversees the development of some of the most powerful publications in the magazine business, including *Cosmopolitan*, *Harper's Bazaar*, *Esquire*, *Good Housekeeping*, and *O: The Oprah Magazine*, Black says editors constantly work to keep all Americans, not just New Yorkers, in mind for their coverage. "It is very dangerous to start thinking that all of this country is like the people that you're having dinner with that night."

Black believes more doors are open to women than were a decade ago — but she signals that there are still some barriers at the top. When asked whether she encounters gender-related challenges, she offers a resounding "yes" and a knowing look. "It is certainly easier for women these days," she says, "but it's not easy."

Still, Black stands as an example that making it is more than possible in magazines. Her recent record with Oprah's wildly successful magazine is a case in point. •

— Caryn Meyers

'There's been an adaptation to what sells, to what the market is'

DAVID HALBERSTAM Twenty-two years ago, in *The Powers*



DAVID HALBERSTAM is the author of *The Powers That Be*, *The Best and the Brightest*, and *The Fifties*.

That Be, David Halberstam wrote about the role of the national media as the primary shapers of national thought. He chronicled the rise and reign of media pillars like *The Washington Post* and *Time* magazine, tracing the parallel destinies of these powerful giants and that of the nation. Along the way he urged the press to be more responsible in its role as a power player in the arena of public policy.

Today, with a few companies dominating the media landscape, Halberstam's insights read like visionary text. Surveying today's media landscape, the veteran writer says, "I think to the degree that there's been a decline in the profession, it's due to a change of values," adding, "Throughout much of the media, there's been a far greater

process of accommodation to values that ten years ago, twenty years ago, would've been considered frivolous.

"Some editors out in rural America would claim their readers and viewers didn't care about Vietnam, they only cared about the price of corn or the interest rates. And the New York editors could say, quite accurately, that they should care about Vietnam and that soon enough they would care. So those news judgments were based on high professionalism and agreed-upon standards.

"I think that era is largely gone," Halberstam says. "The media world is much more fragmented now. Power has passed from print to television and the television values have changed it all quite dramatically. The values now evident — especially in what are called the news magazines — are not especially New York values; if anything they're Hollywood values, so whether the executive producers live in New York or L.A. makes no difference." •

— Evan Serpick

'The new media elite act like Hollywood moguls'

ANDRÉ SCHIFFRIN pines for the old-school New York

After twenty-eight years at Pantheon Books, André Schiffrin started and now runs the New Press.

media elite. He misses their voices, their ability to make or break a book or idea, their informed and principled approach to the craft of book publishing. Everywhere he goes these days, he bemoans the loss of those arbiters of culture, whose decisions to publish a book or not were informed mainly by their own personal, individualized concerns.

"There are very few people, if any, in the



large houses who are able to say, 'I want this book to be published even if we lose money on it,' he says. "They just can't do that. That power has been taken away from them."

It has been taken away, he says, by the new media elite.

"If an elite consists of people who get paid a great deal of money, who are able to spend a great deal of money, who live in increasing luxury and increasingly look and act like Hollywood moguls, then an elite is still there," he says. •

— John Giuffa

'What I don't quite appreciate is why race is so difficult to talk about'



FRED CORNARD

GERALD BOYD was a *New York Times* White House correspondent, metropolitan editor, and assistant managing editor before becoming deputy managing editor.

GERALD BOYD is both exhausted and exhilarated by talking about race. On the one hand, the *New York Times* deputy managing editor — the first African-American on the paper's masthead — wants to know why he, unlike some of his colleagues, is bombarded with questions about diversity in the media. On the other, he spearheaded the *Times*'s fifteen-part series last year, "How Race Is Lived in America," and speaks forcefully about why a diverse newsroom is a better newsroom. Boyd can't seem to get away from talking about race, but it's unclear that he even wants to.

The child of a low-income family in St. Louis, Boyd won a *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* scholarship to the University of Missouri. He joined the *Post-Dispatch* full-time upon graduating in 1973. He covered city hall, consumer affairs, and housing in St. Louis, and then the paper sent him to Washington to cover Ronald Reagan's White House. After jumping to the *Times* a decade later, he quickly ascended the ladder, becoming an assistant managing editor in 1993 and deputy managing editor in 1997.

"I think it was pretty profound when I went on the *Times*'s masthead," Boyd says. "I don't think you can be a news organization in this day and age and be relevant without practicing diversity, and also appreciating it and understanding it."

The *Times*'s most recent push in that direction came in the form of the series on race in America, which ran over several weeks in the summer. Articles in the series, on such topics as intra-race racism and race relations in the Army, were designed to combat what Boyd perceives to be "racial fatigue" on the part of the reading public.

"Here we had the story of race in America. It is, was, and remains the most vexing domestic story we face as a nation, and yet people weren't talking about it," Boyd says. The challenge fac-

ing those who worked on the series, he says, was how to "think out of the box and find new ways into subjects that people are either tired of or don't think might be relevant to them."

The editors and reporters working on the series, a group that included whites and people of color, learned to push through their fears of talking about race, Boyd says. And if they could do it, he extrapolates, then why can't everybody else?

"What I don't quite appreciate is why race is so difficult to talk about," he says. "What we really evolved into over a period of months was a sort of openness and honesty that said, 'We might be naive about something, but that doesn't necessarily make one a racist.'"

Of course, without a diverse newsroom, these discussions couldn't even get under way, he posits. Although the *Times* has no racial or gender quotas for hiring reporters, the paper has what Boyd terms a "serious commitment" to diversity. And having a diverse staff, he emphasizes, isn't just for the sake of appearance; it's smart journalism and smart business. (It should be noted, though, that Boyd is the only minority news executive among thirteen on the editorial masthead.)

"How can you set out to cover, as a metro story, what is going on in New York City and not have a diverse staff?" Boyd asks. "If you're not doing that, you're putting your franchise in peril. If you look at the changing demographics in this city, this region, and this country, and if you want to be around for the next fifty years, then you'd better preach diversity and practice it."

For a paper like the *Times*, where many reporters attended the same universities and now live in the same neighborhoods, maintaining a diverse staff is crucial, Boyd says. A reporter's background — and race, gender, and ethnicity — can become one of the few things that differentiate his or her worldview from a colleague's.

"Chances are that social and economic differences [among reporters] close after a period of time," Boyd says. "I live on the east side of Manhattan. I take a cab to work. I don't hang out on the block in Bed-Stuy, so that kind of difference is lost." •

— Victoria Still

'Being a journalist is all about trying to make the world better.'

LARRY KRAMER "Because the leading

The author of the novel *Faggots*, and the plays "The Destiny of Me" and "The Normal Heart," Larry Kramer also wrote the screenplay "Women in Love," which won a Golden Globe Award.

paper in this world, because the president of the United States, because the mayor of New York refused to pay attention to us when we told them what was going to happen, a billion people minimum are going to die."

Statements like that are among the reasons the AIDS activist Larry Kramer regards himself as a "pariah" and a "loose cannon" among his peers. Some members of the press call him the angriest gay man in the world. The words of this sixty-five-year-old author and playwright about the government's inattention to AIDS were delivered more with melancholy

than with rage in a recent conversation with Columbia journalism school students.

"I'm not bitter, I'm very sad," says the founder of the Gay Men's Health Crisis, his voice gravelly and slight from the disease he himself

has lived with for two decades. Kramer, whose latest book is *Reports From the Holocaust: The Story of an AIDS Activist*, was recently hospitalized for the first time for his illness. He sounded defeated as he recalled his experience at New York University's Medical Center.

"I had a chance to witness what all our work has accomplished and what it hasn't," he says.

That a billion people will die from the disease was reported by the Harvard AIDS doctor William Haseltine in 1992. Yet, according to Kramer, the U.S. government has done little in the way of funding AIDS education, pushing to get quicker drug approvals, or acknowledging the AIDS pandemic internationally.

But Kramer presses on. He advises journalism students to be strong enough to be unpopular when writing on the topics that capture their passion. "This country is all about fighting evil," he says. "It's not about the media elite. The media elite is evil. Being a writer, being an artist, being a creative person, being a fighter, being an activist, being a journalist is all about trying to make the world better. The rest is bullshit." •

— Leslie Akst

CJR asked journalists outside New York to evaluate the impact of Manhattan's media. Here are their responses

THE OTHER COAST WEIGHS IN

Los Angeles: 'New York seems to float away from America'

BY STEVE WASSERMAN, BOOK REVIEW EDITOR, LOS ANGELES TIMES



STEVE WASSERMAN started on the op-ed pages of the *Los Angeles Times* in 1978. He spent ten years in book publishing before returning to the *Times* as book review editor.

The idea that a New York media cabal continues to exercise significant influence west of the Hudson is a notion so self-serving that it could only have been hatched at Elaine's. The big story, largely missed by the media sultans of Manhattan, is how New York has lost its buzz and no longer has a full Nelson on the nation's cultural life. Increasingly wealthy, wired, and worldly, Americans no longer take most of their cultural cues from a tribe of Gotham commissars

whose greatest gift is their capacity for self-absorption. Does anyone seriously believe that the values to be found in the pages of, say, *Vanity Fair* are more those of Manhattan than Hollywood? What is

striking is the degree to which ordinary Americans no longer pay much attention to the pronunciamientos delivered on high from the traditional organs of the eastern press. For example, during the long and forlorn impeachment year, a majority of Americans refused to endorse the media fatwa, led by the excellent *New York Times*, to condemn President Clinton for his unruly sex life. It was almost enough to give one hope in the citizenry's collective sobriety as much of the New York punditocracy grew ever more shrill as they faced the fact of their diminishing influence.

To be sure, New York pulses with money and Wall Street financiers batten on get-rich schemes for which they find a market of millions of gullible Americans. But media clout? That is another matter. It was AOL, after all, based outside of Washington, D.C., that gobbled up Time Warner, based in Manhattan. And, arguably, it is Los Angeles, the red-hot center of the nation's industrial-entertainment complex, which dictates (for better or worse) what Americans watch

on television and see in Cineplexes. As for radio, last time I looked, neither Minnesota Public Radio nor National Public Radio had relocated to Manhattan. Influential opinion magazines like *The New Republic* and *The Atlantic*, *Salon* and *Slate*, to name only a few, are to be found elsewhere. Meanwhile, technology has democratized book production, and the specter of the e-book has plunged publishing into its greatest structural crisis since Gutenberg. Moreover, the single most important individual influencing book-buying habits across the country is a woman named Oprah who runs a media empire out of Chicago.

But nostalgia is a commodity whose value increases as the world it seeks to recall disappears. The very idea of a list of the most important New York media people betrays status anxiety. Is New York still important? Of course. Is it still an island? You bet it is. And increasingly it seems to float away from an America whose disdain it foolishly courts even as it presumes to speak for the rest of us. •

San Francisco: 'There has always been a sense of entitlement on the East Coast'

BY PHIL BRONSTEIN, EXECUTIVE EDITOR, SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE

East Coast bias. That's the theme of my assignment from those sanctimonious, condescending, dismissive New York s.o.b.s at CJR.

What do they know? Nothing. And whatever I say, they won't take it seriously. They'll snicker and give each other secret handshakes. All of them in their tweedy, faux-intellectual outfits. Or maybe their pinstripe suits and tasseled loafers. Whatever. They're all originally from *The New York Times* anyway, those paunchy people with middle initials. Or

a few from the *Washington Post* — blue blazers and khaki pants and beards. Except for the women, not that there are a lot of those back there.

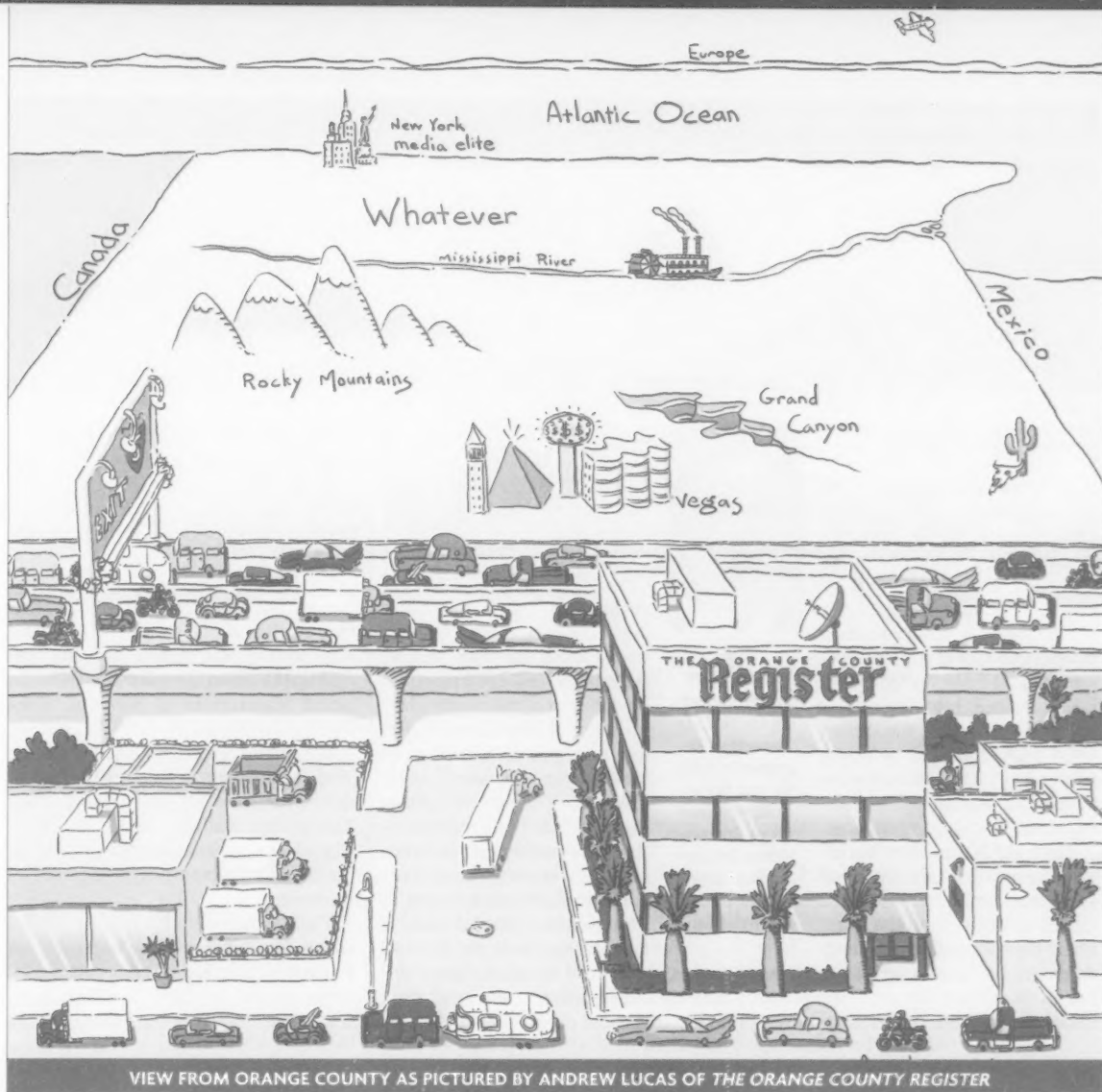
Do I sound bitter? Or angry? Pardon me, I'll just go see my tantric, macrobiotic, vegan, reincarnated, homeopathic therapist and figure it out. It's all about me, after all.

You think I'm being too sensitive? You judge. Here was the query:

"CJR is working on an issue on the New York media elite and how the concentra-

tion of media power in one location distorts the news and information the rest of the country receives." You wish. How typical is this East Coast assumption from the East Coast? This question is not "if" but "how." If you ask my opinion, you distort your own news just by that thinking. Way out here, we just figure that's presumptuous and move on.

"The three major television news organizations, *Time* and *Newsweek*, The Associated Press, *The New York Times* and *The Wall Street Journal* and scores of maga-



VIEW FROM ORANGE COUNTY AS PICTURED BY ANDREW LUCAS OF THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

zines are among those clustered on the island of Manhattan." Sure, remind us again that you've got all the power. All the old — some of it fading — power. We've got Napster and Intel and *Salon* and CNet and @home and *Variety* and *Sunset* and our own scores of magazines and a bunch of other important media outlets. Don't you think you're being a little near-sighted and stuffy? Hello! Like, Wake Up!

Sorry, but people don't need all you New York media elite as much anymore (or me, or us either). Smugness could kill us all.

"We would like the perspective of people outside New York on this phenomenon." How generous. Thanks for caring. "Specifically, would you write 400-500 words on how — if at all — the New York media elite affects what goes on in your newspaper?" Ah, there, at last, is an "if." Thank you for that. But you think I

can scrounge up 500 words on how the snooty, self-obsessed East Coast media elite *doesn't* affect my newspaper? It's a loaded deal, right? I wasn't born yesterday. Okay, maybe reborn. But still.

"Finally, what (if anything) should be done to confront the power of this group? And how does one go about doing it?" Are you really going to do something about it? Am I? Although we're not really into confrontation out here, how about this: We could start an anti-Latitudinalism League. Or just ignore it.

Remember: we started Beat and hippies and Bierce and Hendrix and love-ins and Niners and Raiders and movie studios and agents. And we invented the Internet. Really. Jack London and Jack Kerouac liked us better. So wise up, East Coast Media Elite. You're living in the past.

On the practical side, we have a few

anecdotes. For instance, the experience of a current colleague at the *Chronicle* who was a Nieman finalist and who was interviewed by a panel including the then managing editor of a major East Coast daily. "The interview was great," the reporter said, "but the last question came from [that editor]. It went something like, 'We say at [my paper] that San Francisco gets the lousy newspapers it deserves. What do you think?'"

Well, we say at the *Chronicle* that rudeness and dumb questions are no substitutes for intellectual dexterity or wit.

You see, the bias you ask about only affects us when we're obliged to answer some haughty question like that. East Coast slant is a state of mind, mostly residing in the cerebra of East Coast media

CONTINUED ON PAGE 48

There is, it's true, some concern in Los Angeles about the growing concentration of media power in the East. But that power's home base is in Chicago, not New York. Out here we are still reeling a bit from last year's sale of the *Los Angeles Times* to the Chicago Tribune Company. While the loss of local ownership represents a profound change for Los Angeles, there is little new about the concentration of clout in New York. The impact of *The New York Times*, combined with the reach of the network news operations and the

newsweeklies, has been a fact of life for generations. If anything, though, their power may have eroded a bit over the past few years — except for the *Times*. Not because it is based in New York or because it is part of a conglomerate, but because, for all of its faults, it represents the best in journalism. Frankly, I hope that it has the effect of setting a standard that does have an impact on the aspirations and quality of newspapers everywhere. *Geoffrey Cowan is dean of the Annenberg School for Communication at the University of Southern California.*

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The truth is that there has always been a sense of entitlement and superiority on the East Coast, a belief that the West Coast is populated by foolhardy dreamers and thieves and whackos run out of New York by the prejudice of closed doors and minds and institu-



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There. You have a lot more than 500 words. You got me going, even though I'm saying your bias doesn't affect us.

Go ahead. Be Elite. We'll be here, soaking our heads in the hot tub. *

Portland: 'Personal crises become real only when they happen to New York editors'

BY SANDRA MIMS ROWE, EDITOR, *THE OREGONIAN*

David Remnick, editor of *The New Yorker*, crafted a "Talk of the Town" item during World Series week that contrasted the fun and games of the series with the serious mischief going on around the world.

Of New Yorkers, he wrote: "wallowing in exquisite nightly drama and unapologetic self-regard, New Yorkers seem for the moment to need nothing, and no one else, in the world."

So, what's new? I wondered, seizing the snarky Left Coast lens with which I



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now view New York. Yes, even way out here at the edge of the continent, we see *The New York Times* and *The Wall Street Journal* as the gold standard for the newspaper world. We read both every day (No, they don't come out weeks later by Pony Express; they actually deliver that day's edition every morning on your doorstep if you choose). But much as we read, rely on, and revere the New York-based media kings, they are occasionally so

culturally out of touch with the rest of the United States that it's fine sport for us to skewer them.

Certain crimes do not occur until they occur in New York. The city's crime news — whether about a child beating, an attack with a brick on the street, murder at a Wendy's, or a shooting by cops — gets disproportionate national coverage. Similar incidents happen all over the country and get little coverage. The concentration of big media in the city sometimes distorts news stories, making them larger than life.

Cultural trends never happen until they happen in New York. Even personal life crises only become real when they happen to New York editors. An Oregon

editor who left the Center of the Known World for the West Coast (and whose friends assured her when she moved she would, for all practical purposes, cease to exist), swears she can track the personal lives of about a dozen top New York editors by what social phenomena appear in news features on the front pages of the *Times* or *The Wall Street Journal*. When *The New York Times* discovers that Spanish lessons are all the rage for Manhattan toddlers, she knows just whose child is now learning how to *lisp uno, dos, tres*.

Or when she notices an authoritative piece on chiropractors, she suspects she knows whose back is acting up. And when she reads about fair ways to split 401(k) assets between feuding spouses, she wonders if she-knows-who is contemplating you-know-what.

Ethical issues also receive attention when they come up in the New York media world. I got into a tiff last year with Steven Brill when he sent around his proposal for voluntary restrictions on covering the bereaved after the deaths of loved ones. He identified this as a problem only after the death of New Yorker John Kennedy Jr. It sent me over the edge. Out here in the real world the rest of us inhabit we deal with this on a regular, up-close-and-personal basis, I wrote him. We actually live with the people we cover, grappling with coverage issues around funerals when police officers fall in the line of duty, when young drivers with more confidence than skill manage to kill themselves and others, even when sick children take guns into schools

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I've always wondered what it must be like for the many top editors who have spent their entire lives working and living in New York City where doormen walk dogs and supers fix sinks and dinner is delivered in white cardboard boxes by men on bicycles and only the insane talk to the people they pass on the streets. Is it any wonder in their anthropological forays into the real world, New York journalists "discover" the quaint practices of the natives? Editing by Braille, I call it. *

San Jose: '...trapped in a self-contained and self-reinforcing world-view'

BY JAY HARRIS, EDITOR, THE SAN JOSE MERCURY NEWS



JAY HARRIS has spent thirty years in journalism as a reporter, editor, educator, and executive. He is a member of the Pulitzer Prize board.

The major New York-based news organizations seem trapped in a self-contained and self-reinforcing world-view that permeates the "Bos-NY-Wash" corridor and the various elites who live and work therein. It is the regional equivalent of "inside the Beltway" thinking that at times makes Washington-based journalists, and the public figures and institutions they cover, seem out of touch with the rest of the nation.

That said, the concentration of major news organizations in New York is not a problem for the *Mercury News*. If any-

thing, it constitutes a competitive advantage for us.

Our daily report is more relevant to our readers, more reflective of their priorities and perspectives, and therefore of greater utility to them.

Such differences in perspective lead us to approach some stories differently than our brethren in Manhattan — both in the priority we give them and the approach we take.

A few examples may help make the point:

■ We recognized the importance and potential impact of the Internet earlier than most news organizations. We committed heavily to the story of the emerging news medium for commerce and communication years before others did.

■ Early on, thanks in part to feedback from our substantial Asian community and in part to the diversity of our news-

room staff and leadership, we took a more skeptical view of the government's allegations in the Wen Ho Lee case than some New York-based news organizations.

■ In November, when a major Japanese firm agreed to pay a \$4.6 million settlement to the relatives of Chinese who were forced to work under slave-like conditions during World War II, it was a front-page story for us. In the national edition of *The New York Times* the story appeared on Page A16.

In the same way, we have been more aggressive as a business — and as a news organization — in responding to the reality of the increasing diversity of our audience.

As long as we chart our course by our own compass, the perspective and priorities of New York-based media are no threat. Rather, they provide a useful point of comparison and valued supplement to our own endeavors. *

TONY RIDDER: IT'S ALL ABOUT PROXIMITY

I am of the opinion that geography may account for some things being over-covered, and some things missed entirely . . . but by and large, these "distortions," if that is the right word, have virtually no bearing on what our own papers report.

Most of the eastern media missed the story of the growth and importance of Silicon Valley for years — not because of any inherent elitism or snobbishness, but because they were based 3,000 miles away. Conversely, the eastern media may

over-cover some other things, notably in the journalistic/financial realms: Cap Cities's acquisition of ABC, the Newhouses' purchase of *The New Yorker*, and coverage of magazine and book publishing. But again, I don't see anything sinister here. (Parochial, maybe, but not sinister!) It is proximity, and the media's own interested bias, that prompts such coverage.

Tony Ridder is chairman and chief executive officer of Knight Ridder.

GEOFFREY COWAN: ERODING POWER

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■ Early on, thanks in part to feedback from our substantial Asian community and in part to the diversity of our news-

room staff and leadership, we took a more skeptical view of the government's allegations in the Wen Ho Lee case than some New York-based news organizations.

■ In November, when a major Japanese firm agreed to pay a \$4.6 million settlement to the relatives of Chinese who were forced to work under slave-like conditions during World War II, it was a front-page story for us. In the national edition of *The New York Times* the story appeared on Page A16.

In the same way, we have been more aggressive as a business — and as a news organization — in responding to the reality of the increasing diversity of our audience.

As long as we chart our course by our own compass, the perspective and priorities of New York-based media are no threat. Rather, they provide a useful point of comparison and valued supplement to our own endeavors. •

TONY RIDDER: IT'S ALL ABOUT PROXIMITY

I am of the opinion that geography may account for some things being over-covered, and some things missed entirely... but by and large, these "distortions," if that is the right word, have virtually no bearing on what our own papers report.

Most of the eastern media missed the story of the growth and importance of Silicon Valley for years — not because of any inherent elitism or snobbishness, but because they were based 3,000 miles away. Conversely, the eastern media may

over-cover some other things, notably in the journalistic/financial realms: Cap Cities's acquisition of ABC, the Newhouses' purchase of *The New Yorker*, and coverage of magazine and book publishing. But again, I don't see anything sinister here. (Parochial, maybe, but not sinister!) It is proximity, and the media's own interested bias, that prompts such coverage. Tony Ridder is chairman and chief executive officer of Knight Ridder.

Sacramento: 'Looking at ink blots'

BY GREGORY FAVRE,
GROUP EDITOR, McCLATCHY

About thirty-five years ago, our American Press Institute class for managing editors was entertained at *The New York Times* with drinks and dinner and good conversation. Naturally, we wanted to say thanks and elected one of our group to offer a toast.

"On behalf of everyone," he said as he lifted his glass, "I want to thank *The New York Times* for its hospitality and I want to thank it for showing us everything we should do and everything we shouldn't do, all in the same paper." Thank goodness, we had already eaten dessert.

That was long ago and the times and the *Times* have changed, as have all of our newspapers. Some are better, some are worse, some are long gone.

Are those of us on this side of the Hudson River guided by the *Times's* front-page budgets or what the networks are playing at the top of their shows, or what the news magazines or *The Wall Street Journal* think the important stories are?

I think not.

This doesn't mean that we don't depend on news services headquartered in the shadows of Times Square or Rockefeller Center for some news and information that appears in our papers daily. None of us has the resources to cover all of the world.

But the fact is, local and regional news together are at the core of most of our franchises, recognizing that the definition of local is changing. It has more layers than ever before, more dimensions. It is more sophisticated, more complicated, and there are many more nuances to deal with.

California is the first state without an ethnic majority. That will be true of this nation by the middle of this century if projections are accurate. We have to understand and explain a society that is rapidly changing and we shouldn't need folks from somewhere else to tell us what is important in our neighborhoods.

I've read stories published in New York about our state or about our governors, past and present, and it was like a Rorschach test. Were we looking at the same inkblots? •

FROM OTHER PLACES

Kentucky: 'Persistent navel gazing'

BY JIM SQUIRES, FORMER EDITOR, CHICAGO TRIBUNE



JIM SQUIRES
is a teacher
and a horse
breeder, and
a former
spokesman
for the Ross
Perot
presidential
campaign.

All four decades of my professional life in the intersection of journalism and politics have been spent just "off Broadway" on the edge of the klieg light glare of New York's media elite.

From my front-row seat, the din of concern over the inordinate influence exerted by a handful of powerful media institutions and individuals rooted in and around Manhattan has been loud and constant.

As a group, the "impact media" — as its members like to call themselves — are no better or worse than any other human beings assembled in a particular geographic location. (And like all herd animals, journalists are almost always led by their best and brightest. So the direction in which they all eventually stampede is seldom over the cliff.)

What the New York media elite do best, however, is report on each other, a kind of persistent navel gazing that even this very project might exemplify. They clearly go about their work while constantly in search of the company and opinions of each other and preoccupied with their own celebrity and pecking order status. Ironically, this limits rather than enhances their supposed power.

By the time something new and important becomes the grist of luncheon conversation and cocktail talk in the Big Apple, it has already made news somewhere else. True, when once clued in, this well-paid clique of self-absorbed neighbors does a remarkable job of quickly consuming all the newsprint space, air-time, cell-phone minutes, and

book contracts that might otherwise be available to more original and creative talents elsewhere.

But worry about the nation's agenda being set by an incestuous band of media brandnames, camera-ready faces, and famous bylines may well be misplaced. A far greater concern is that they and the newspapers, magazines, and broadcast outlets they represent are becoming increasingly indentured to an ownership driven more by economic imperatives than agenda-setting.

With rare exception, the people truly in control of information in this country are not New York journalists but the people who sign their paychecks — global entrepreneurs, dot.com billionaires from Seattle, entertainment moguls from Los Angeles, and faceless stockbrokers from Chicago. It is who signs the paychecks that really matters.

The most flagrant, alarming, and potentially destructive example of concentrated media power in my lifetime occurred the night of November 7 when most of the great media voices joined in prematurely and irresponsibly reporting the erroneous results of the presidential election.

This was not rush to judgment by egotistical journalists drunk with the power to influence the election, but rather a direct and unavoidable result of the economic decisions and imperatives of their owners.

The Voter News Service, a single joint project by networks and other media companies to provide election-return data, was a creation designed to reduce the cost of covering the election while at the same time allowing television to report to a prime-time audience the results before the votes were ever counted.

My local newspaper, through no fault of its own, was wrong, too; not because an egocentric elite media have congregated in New York but because human greed is more pervasive than ever in the society it serves. •

SOME OTHER VIEWS

Alabama: 'Even liberal southern papers in the '60s tired of Yankee superiority'

BY BRANDT AYERS, PUBLISHER, *THE ANNISTON STAR*



BRANDT AYERS has been a journalist since the early 1960s. He co-owns five papers and is also a syndicated columnist, commentator, and lecturer.

And, finally getting a real department store with the doubling of Quintard Mall! Local readers aren't casualties of the

The question about media power concentrated in Manhattan was put during question time at my local parliament, the Courthouse BarberShop. The response was: "Huh? They don't bother me none."

In normal times, the national media mean very little to *The Anniston Star* and its readers.

What sparks debate in Prime Minister Jimmy Turner's parliament is: the squabbling city council. The first elected school board.

plague, which has swept all but about 300 local papers — some run by vivid characters — into a pureed and neutered mass. But New York isn't the only source of the infection. Most former family papers are now in a pot of homogenized, chain-owned mediocrity.

The New York media almost never affect us, but there was a time during the civil rights movement when southerners — bigots and reformers alike — felt blows of the media elite to their self-esteem.

It was as if the original sin of prejudice had just been discovered and isolated, like an exotic virus found only in subtropical climes. Every southerner was Bull Connor or Sheriff Jim Clark — a mile wide, and all ugly.

What made the 1960s even harder for some folks here was the local paper lining up with the "liberal Yankee press."

But even we few liberal southern papers in the '60s, living at the cutting edge

of change, tired of Yankee superiority: Boston and New York as centers for the export of moral concern.

We are nostalgic about the '60s because we will never know a time of greater moral clarity, but we cringe at every civil rights anniversary celebrated with lazy "roll the tape" journalism beamed from New York — the burned bus, the fire hoses, yet again. Where is the fresh reporting, the context, the great writing that unlocks secrets of the human condition?

New York means little to a family paper. The relationship is between one family and an entire community. The emotional strings of such a relationship are tuned more like a cello or violin than, say, a Pete Sampras tennis racquet.

It is precisely that sensitivity that gives a family newspaper its unique personality. It may be less objective than a New York network, but it is more caring: scolding and loving; hurting, being hurt and loving. •

Minnesota: 'Midwesterners wouldn't want to think like New Yorkers'

BY TIM MCGUIRE, EDITOR AND SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT OF NEW MEDIA, *MINNEAPOLIS STAR TRIBUNE*



TIM MCGUIRE joined *The Star Tribune* Company in 1979. He is the new president of the American Society of Newspaper Editors.

New York is a great city and thousands of midwesterners like to visit the place, but they wouldn't want to think like New Yorkers.

Midwestern editors have been known to watch the occasional network newscast but few are taking notes so they can feed the same stuff to their culturally deprived readers.

That's because their readers are not culturally deprived, no matter what New Yorkers might think. In fact, Twin Cities theaters

sell the highest number of theater tickets per capita in the country outside of New York. I know that because I read it in the *Star Tribune* last Sunday. I read stories putting the Twin Cities in a national perspective all the time in the *Star Tribune*.

We approach things differently on many different fronts. The *Times* plays a lot of stories on foreign events on page one. We tend to look for a seminal moment in a developing foreign story before running it on the front page. One gets the sense the *Times* sometimes shapes its excellent foreign coverage to address what the powerful are interested in while we shape our coverage for a much broader audience.

The *Times* and other New York-based news organizations seem to focus much more of their attention on the East Coast

power structure. The *Times* will do page-one stories on almost every budget proposal from the president. We play very few of those stories on page one.

On the other hand, we often find ourselves playing education and transportation stories much more prominently than New York media do. We also find ourselves working harder to get more normal people into our medical coverage as opposed to medical experts.

None of this is to say midwesterners don't care what New Yorkers think. The *New York Times* called Minneapolis "Murderapolis" a few years ago, spurring the city to action in a way none of our coverage of the rising murder rate could.

News from the country's largest city is important and has value, but it does not dictate how we in the heartland cover the news. •

Pennsylvania: 'Wall hanging'

BY GENE COLLIER, COLUMNIST, PITTSBURGH POST-GAZETTE



GENE COLLIER spent twenty-two years as a sports writer for several Pennsylvania and New Jersey papers. He became a columnist in 1984.

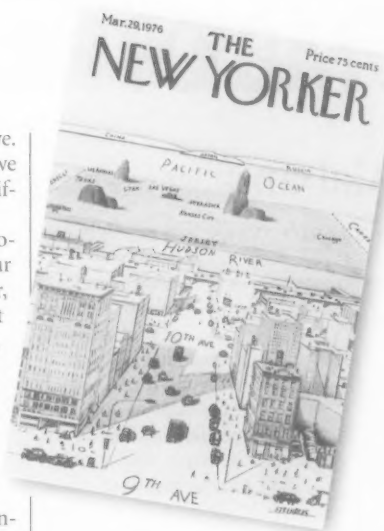
On an exterior wall of the editor's office at the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* hangs a framed, enlarged cover of *The New Yorker*, the one that taps into an apparent New York perspective on the relative geography of the balance of America, the part that is not New York. It shows 9th Avenue in Manhattan in the foreground, then 10th Avenue, then the Hudson, then Jersey, then . . . Kansas City. An inch beyond,

the Pacific, then presumably the abyss. Though it might be regarded as an apt, pastel metaphor for New York's thick concentration of media and some inherent informational distortion, its signifi-

cance in this office is purely decorative. Do the New York media affect what we do? Undoubtedly. And what is the significance of that? Unclear.

"It's like thinking about who produces the majority of food in your diet," said the *Post-Gazette's* editor, John Craig. "It's like asking what effect the plain states have on you. Well sure, most of the farming is done there. But in a way, so what? You buy what you think is best, regardless of where it comes from."

"Because you have a concentration of media in New York, do you then have a concentration of conventional wisdom? I don't see the country quite that way. I see it more as New York, Washington, L.A. The government is in Washington, and that's where most news comes from. The entertainment industry is in Los Angeles, and the large portion of that kind of news comes from there, with some of that obviously from New York as well."



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While clearly no American media outlet beyond Manhattan should be habitually spoon-fed by New York, the explosive proliferation of news sources elsewhere has forever changed the equation. It might not be any easier to avoid distortion out there, but it is far easier to avoid New York's special brand of it. •

Florida: 'Usual Question'

BY PAUL TASH, EDITOR AND PRESIDENT, THE ST. PETERSBURG TIMES

Our food writer, attending a journalism convention, sat on a bus next to her counterpart from a news organization that likes to think of itself as a national newspaper. After the perfunctory introductions, my colleague got the question that we have come to anticipate under such circumstances:

Is there anything interesting to write about out there?

Somehow we manage. Along with hundreds of other newspapers outside New York (and those other cities that envy it), we demonstrate every day that there is abundant and interesting life beyond The Center of the Universe.

Of course, there are good stories in New York and environs, and the rest of us count on the truly national news organizations to cover them well.

But interesting and important though



PAUL TASH started at the *St. Petersburg Times* in 1978. He is on the board of the American Society of Newspaper Editors and a director of the Committee to Protect Journalists.

they are, those stories are not going to be the main course on the news menu we offer our readers. At the *St. Pete Times*, we want to look out on the world from the vantage of our readers, and there's a lot of territory between here and New York (or Washington, or Los Angeles).

That balance of interests suggests a couple of important points — one for the crews dense-packed into the news capitals, and the other for those of us stretched out along the journalistic zone of defense that is supposed to cover the rest of the country.

For the first group: come out from the places you typically cover and you'll find some really good stories.

For the rest of us, we must remember not to rely too heavily on coverage from places that produce lots of datelines. The AP and the supplemental wire services

spill out enough copy and pictures every day to fill our columns, if we wanted, but our readers could get that stuff somewhere else.

What they can't get elsewhere is the distinctive story, nicely crafted, about the state legislator who is battling depression even as she battles a campaign opponent, about the state attorney who shot himself in the midst of questions about his finances, about the drought that is not only wilting the flowers that give Florida its name but draining the reservoirs that newcomers need to supply their new developments.

The bigger danger to journalism is not the concentration of media in New York and a few other cities.

What's more serious is the potential erosion of newsgathering firepower in places where reporters are not already stacked two and three deep. It's difficult and expensive to maintain a group of talented journalists to cover a community well — much more expensive than falling back on the wires. •

A BEAT COMES OF AGE

*One Baby Boomer Turns Fifty Every Seven Seconds.
The Press Is Paying Attention*

BY MARY ELLEN SCHOONMAKER

Although all newspapers do stories that bear on aging — the local senior center, the presidential candidates' positions on Medicare reform, prescription drug benefits — regular, consistent coverage of aging issues is often minimal. But at about fifty papers around the country, the age beat has become a full-fledged specialty, and a full-time job at fifteen of those.

It's a good beat. Some veteran age-beat reporters have the run of the paper and may see their stories placed anywhere from page one to business, lifestyle, even sports. They have columns and Web sites and write books based on their reporting. And some have prizes. Michael Vitez of *The Philadelphia Inquirer* won a Pulitzer Prize in 1997 for his series on death and dying, which grew out of his regular work on the beat.

These reporters are covering not just people of a certain age, but a historic change, as the U.S. population ages as never before. The baby boomers, one of whom turns fifty every seven seconds, will be the largest single generation of older people in history. The age-beat audience is not only older people, but also middle-aged readers who are caring for their parents and starting to think about the last part of their own lives.

"A reporter must delve into economics, psychology, culture, law, education, ethics, politics, and medicine, even real estate development and city planning, to do a proper job," says Maureen West of *The Arizona Republic*. She is one of a small group of reporters who get together each year at the conventions of the American Society on Aging and the Gerontological Society of America. They are members of the Journalists Exchange on Aging, which publishes a quarterly newsletter, *AgeBeat*, with a circulation of about 200. "We're a small, friendly network," West says. "Reporters can call us for advice."



Willard Wicks, 88, participates in a physical therapy session at a fall-prevention workshop for senior citizens at Trinity Lutheran Church in Minneapolis. Wicks, who recently moved to an assisted-living facility, has fallen three times in the past few months. (Star Tribune photo by Josh Green)

Fear of falling

New programs aim to help the elderly maintain their health by teaching them to prevent falls.

Typical of the work of Warren Wolfe for the *Minneapolis Star-Tribune* was an October report on falling, the leading cause of accidents among senior citizens.

The age beat can range from news of medical breakthroughs, Social Security, and Medicare reforms, to the growth of assisted-living communities, to John Glenn going back into space. It can have a big impact on readers. Age-beat reporters say they are often inundated with comments and questions and tips.

They point out, too, that the appeal of the coverage often goes beyond the elderly. When she had the age beat, for example, Denise Gamino of the *Austin Ameri-*

can-Statesman wrote several articles in 1997 about Lela and Raymond Howard, a couple in their eighties who went for a drive in their car and disappeared. They had been going to a nearby festival but ended up several hundred miles into Arkansas before they drove into a ravine. The bodies were not found for two weeks.

Gamino visited their empty house, retraced their steps as far as she could, and, in one story, wrote that they were on a "roadtrip into thin air." That image

A JOURNALIST FINDS THE SECRET OF AGING WELL

A *Arizona Republic* reporter Maureen West had no idea that a column she wrote about the hundreds of elderly people who died in the Chicago heat wave of 1995 would change her life. She wanted her readers to understand why they died: because they were frightened of intruders and so kept their windows closed in heat that soared to over 100 degrees, because they were too poor to have air conditioning, and because they were so isolated. By the time someone checked on them, most were already dead.

In her research, West talked to James Birren, the associate director of UCLA's Center on Aging, and he encouraged her to do more articles on older people because there are so many stories out there. She flew to the West Coast to see him and joined his walking group in the Santa Monica mountains. "I was impressed with her because she wanted to pursue stories more in depth," says Birren, who became West's mentor.

The idea of an aging beat was taking shape in her mind, but West says she felt she needed to do more research first. She got a Knight Fellowship at Stanford University, taking a leave from her paper to study the psychology of aging, along with related issues in public policy, health care, and social welfare. "That was an invaluable year," she says, "giving me time to develop expertise and to think about what I wanted to do."

She began the beat at the *Arizona Republic* determined not to write about stereotypes. She asked not to be placed in the paper's Sun City bureau, in a retirement community, so that she would not be restricted by the views and life-styles of just one segment of older people. "Only about 10 percent live in retirement communities," she says, "but that's where a lot of reporters go when they are doing a story on aging."

Her approach to the beat has been imaginative and unlimited. She has camped in the Mojave Desert with an eighty-nine-year-old woman who was hiking to Washington, D.C., to push for cam-



PAUL GERO

paign finance reform. She's spent time on the Navajo reservation learning how elderly Native Americans are cared for. She's also written touchingly about a psychologist whose mother had Alzheimer's and could no longer communicate. The daughter created a simple way of talking that they could share. It ended the frustration and resulted in a guidebook that has helped other families.

The daughter "always brings her mother a little treat," West wrote, "usually a muffin or piece of fresh

fruit, in the same small, brightly colored bag that is easy to spot. She brings pieces of wrapped candy to give to other residents in the halls. 'There is no such thing as going to see just one person in a nursing home,' she says."

Last year, West won the first Hugh Downs Award for journalism on aging from the International Longevity Center in New York. After three years on the beat, she is still looking, as she was in her first column on the Chicago heat wave, for ways to fight what she calls the "excruciating loneliness" that some older people endure. She is also looking for advances in medicine and psychology, in public policy, in workplace and retirement practices, and in society's attitudes, that will enable more and more people to be healthy and productive longer than ever before.

At forty-eight, West has worked all over the country, from Daytona Beach, Florida, to Fayetteville, North Carolina, to Lexington, Kentucky, in all sorts of journalism jobs. She realizes that she is one of the people she writes about, baby boomers facing their own fiftieth birthdays and confronting, perhaps for the first time, their mortality. But she's not one of the boomers experiencing birthday sticker-shock.

Through her reporting, West says, she's learned that thinking positive, adapting to change, and finding new ways to grow are the secrets to aging well. "In my fifties," she says. "I think I'll probably reinvent myself again." ■

caught the attention of the leader of an Austin rock group, Fastball, who used her stories as inspiration for the million-selling hit, "The Way," about a couple who vanish without a trace. Gamino learned about her connection to the hit song from the *American-Statesman's* rock critic, who had interviewed the band.

Who could have guessed that millions of teenagers would love a song about an old man recovering from brain surgery and a woman with Alzheimer's driving aimlessly around the backroads of Texas and Arkansas?

Another pioneer on the beat is Diane Lade of the *South Florida Sun-Sentinel*. She was recently working on two stories that show the range she brings to the beat: a profile of a ninety-five-year-old ballroom dancing champion and an analysis of campaign contributions by the nursing home industry. She writes a bimonthly business column, "Mature Money." And she is organizing six community forums to discuss three topics chosen by older readers from a list of ten,



Diane Lade

including Medicare and prescription drug coverage, long-term care, and problems with HMOs. A series of resulting articles will summarize the discussions and the package will be presented to the Florida legislature.

Lade says the legislative package is a great way to give older people a voice and demonstrate that the paper is serious about their interests. "Papers have all kinds of programs to attract young readers," she says. "Older readers are by and large ignored."

'The beat has percolated up from the bottom of the newsroom, driven by reporters who see things happening in their own families and communities'

It is generally reporters who first propose an age beat at a newspaper, says Paul Kleyman, the editor of *Aging Today*, a publication of the American Society on Aging, and the founder of the Journalists Exchange on Aging. The beat "has percolated up from the bottom of the newsroom," he says, often "created and driven by reporters who see things happening in their own families and communities that are not being covered."

Warren Wolfe of the Minneapolis *Star-Tribune* says aging is the "most exciting reporting job" he has had. He echoes other reporters who say the beat can be as broad and deep as you want to make it. A twenty-six part series he wrote in 1992 on all aspects of care-giving for older people, from mental health and Alzheimer's to parents who won't do what you want them to, ran once a week for half a year, then was published as a book. Wolfe says he still gets comments and questions about the series.

At the *Orange County Register* in southern California, Jane Glenn Haas has discovered numerous ways to reach read-

ers. She covers aging trends for the paper's culture section, writes a nationally syndicated column on aging, "Our Time," has a weekly cable television show, has started a Web site (www.womansage.com), and has published a collection of her columns.

As she sees it, her audience of baby boomers and their parents can span up to four generations. To create a bond with them, she sometimes uses her own experience, writing, for example, about her face lift, complete with before and after photos, and her bout with breast cancer. She also writes about issues in what she calls "social medicine," such as understanding the financial ins and outs of home care and finding the right assisted-living arrangements.

The diversity and depth of the beat, says James Birren, associate director of UCLA's Center on Aging, comes from refusing to simplify. Take the way older peo-

ple approach the vicissitudes of aging. Some are "explorers," who want to actively add to their life experience; they are fairly flexible and not afraid of trying something new. Others are "conservers," who want to hold on to what they have; they are more cautious and fearful of the unfamiliar and have a much harder time coping with change. An information-rich aging beat can be of great help to them and their families.

"Describing the opportunities and offering new models," Birren says — "that's what this aging revolution is all about." Like the enthusiastic journalists on the beat, he believes the media have a special role to play in mapping the uncharted territory of our longer lives. ■



Warren Wolfe



Jane Glenn Haas

Mary Ellen Schoonmaker is a member of the editorial board and a columnist at *The Record in Hackensack, New Jersey*.

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A Daily Column — or A Day at the Races?



BY JACK GERMOND

Jack Germond and Jules Witcover wrote 6,912 columns together for the Baltimore Sun before Germond quit in December. His most recent book is *Fat Man in a Middle Seat: Forty Years of Covering Politics*.

On December 20, the syndicated columnist Jack Germond of the Baltimore Sun's Washington bureau announced he was quitting the column that he and his partner Jules Witcover had produced five times a week for twenty-four years. On January 8, Witcover began the column with the words: "Readers of this

space may notice a name missing from the byline today." He lamented Germond's decision to retire to West Virginia, "conveniently within shouting distance of the Charles Town race track" — a reference to his colleague's penchant for following the fortunes of race horses.

The dual byline allowed Witcover and Germond to play good cop/bad cop, so that when a public figure was angered at something in the column, each could blame it on the other guy.

When asked how long he intended to cover politics, Germond usually replied: "Until they get it right." They never did, but he quit anyway. Here, he explains why.

Looking ahead to the 2000 campaign, I was quite prepared to make it my last. The nature of the campaign reinforced that predilection. The country was being offered two candidates whose principal asset was their family names, two men who had never had to worry about next week's paycheck, two men financed by outlandish amounts of political money, two men who showed early in the primaries that they would do whatever it takes to get elected. One was clearly not prepared for the office, the other was so unsure of his own identity he kept trying to change his persona every few weeks. Both ran totally contrived campaigns aimed solely at that sound

bite on the network television news every night.

The artificial quality of the campaign was particularly hard to swallow. The exposure of the candidates was so carefully controlled that the reporters covering them were reduced to printing exchanges of charges and counter-charges by their hired guns. I will never understand why it was news if Karen Hughes had something negative to say about Al Gore or Chris Lehane about George Bush. It would seem far more newsworthy if a flack found something nice to say about the opposition. But we now live in a time when reporters line up after debates to get spin from the consultants. Giving equal attention to charges and rebuttals may qualify as fairness in American journalism but it hardly qualifies as insightful campaign coverage.

Both campaigns also proved once again, if further proof were needed, that you can sell any message if you stick to it long enough. One example: after losing the New Hampshire primary to John S. McCain, Bush began presenting himself as the "reformer with results," although there was nothing in his record as governor of Texas to support that claim. After ten days of relentless sloganeering, nonetheless, Republicans divided evenly when asked by poll-takers which of their candidates, Bush or McCain, was the true reformer.

There were still a few aspects of the 2000 story to be savored. For a few weeks, at least, McCain demonstrated that a politician could prosper by saying what was on his mind. Although he had many failings as a candidate in his primary challenge to Gore, Bill Bradley at least paid the voters the compliment of talking about serious matters in a serious way.

I enjoyed following the New Hampshire primary through monthly visits with a few local activists in Milford, New Hampshire, and the general election through similar people in several communities in Pennsylvania. There were days passed with governors and mayors who were, if truth be told, political leaders far superior to the two presidential candidates.

But, although I know full well that elections have consequences, I couldn't get very caught up in whether it would be Al Gore or George W. Bush in the White House in the next four years. Each of them has attractive qualities, and they seem to be decent men with good intentions. But parsing their programs and strategies seemed like less than serious work for me to pursue after almost fifty years of reporting.

So I decided to quit. I don't know whether this decision was primarily a function of the embarrassing quality of the 2000 campaign or simply proof that I had grown old and cranky. In fact, it doesn't matter. For whatever reasons, I couldn't face writing a column five days a week. So I left it to my partner of almost twenty-four years, Jules Witcover, who is still reporting with the same commitment and care he has always shown.

Although I have retired from *The Sun*, I hope to continue contributing to the paper as a free-lancer. I will continue shooting off my mouth on the *Inside Washington* television program every week and occasionally in commentaries for National Public Radio. If some publisher offers enough money, I plan to write another book. And I expect to get to the track at least twice a week.

Handicapping can be serious work. ■

Wagging the Dog: Technology and Local TV News



JAKE WILLIAMS

BY C.A. TUGGLE

C.A. Tuggle is an assistant professor of journalism and mass communications at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Before earning his Ph.D., he spent sixteen years as a reporter and producer, including eleven years at station WFLA in Tampa.

The announcer promises live, local, late-breaking news as the theme music of the news show rises to a crescendo. The news operation then delivers, as promised, a number of live reports from across the market. Somewhere, though, the late-breaking part of the promise is lost as reporters deliver instead what

some in the business call "black hole"

shots, live reports from in front of dark buildings long after the relevant activity has ended and everyone (except the news crew) has gone home.

This is not an uncommon scenario. Media observers and practitioners alike are annoyed, or even alarmed, at the tendency to "go live" when there is no journalistic reason for doing so. Two colleagues and I recently sent a survey to 211 media markets across the country. Reporters who responded said again and again that their ability to gather news and tell stories suffers when they are tethered to a camera tied to a live unit providing pictures of nothing. Because they cannot leave the site of the live report, reporters are, in fact, unable to dig for additional facts, to add context — in short, to report.

Worse, as one reporter put it, the prevailing attitude seems to be "a live truck shall not gather dust," leading news producers and managers to look for events that lend themselves to easy live coverage rather than letting the merits of the story dictate whether such coverage is warranted. Others in the survey expressed dismay about the amount of coverage events receive just because they happen close to or during the news hour.

Yet live reporting seems to have become the norm. In our analysis of newscasts from markets of vary-

ing size, reporters appeared live 42 percent more often than they did on tape. Live reports were considerably longer than taped reports, which means fewer stories get covered when there are several live reports in a newscast.

Based on comments from news directors and reporters who responded to the original survey, researchers devised a scale of zero to four to rate the value of live reports. What the practitioners called "black hole" live reports rated a zero. A report in which the reporter obtained updated information by being on scene was assigned a rating of one. A report containing compelling visuals or involving a "tour" from the reporter rated a two. Reports from planned events in progress scored a three, and the highest rating, four, went to coverage of legitimate breaking news. The results: half of the reports that showed only the reporter and no related taped video rated a zero, and 90 percent of the stories that involved a live reporter introduction and/or tag to a taped piece also rated zero. In only a handful of cases did a live report rate three or four on the scale. Simply put, most stories that were reported live contained no late-breaking news and did not, in a journalistic sense, warrant live coverage at all. Frequently, reporters were at the site of an event that had happened hours or even days earlier.

Though one news director told us that viewers will use the remote to find a newscast that contains live reporting if his station isn't doing it, viewers are sophisticated enough to see the difference between legitimate and gratuitous uses of technology. Results from a third study show that viewers value reports from the scene of news that is unfolding, especially

involving weather. Indeed, there are times, viewers tell us, that live reporting enhances coverage of the story, giving them insight and context they would not get from another type of report. However, they also agree, overwhelmingly, that there are times when live reports are meaningless. One viewer characterized this as a bait-and-switch tactic. He looks at the screen thinking "live" indicates important news. Yet, he is often disappointed to find no "real news" at all.

Many viewers say that they think reporting live from outside the house of a couple whose son was shot the night before is intrusive and in poor taste. That is one of the biggest complaints that viewers have about live reporting — that it is often an invasion of privacy and results in the exploitation of victims of tragedies.

The second of viewers' three major complaints is that TV news wastes time on unimportant stories. One viewer wrote that when news operations go live after the fact to cover stories that are relatively inconsequential to begin with, it is "condescending to the viewers." Viewers also say they disdain live reports that seem to have no end. Viewers think that "reporters wind up making news rather than reporting it" and "sound as though they're just filling time."

Another viewer wrote that stations should spend money on content rather than on excessive use of technology. Many news observers and practitioners would agree. Live reporting should be used when it helps tell a story. But often, according to both reporters and viewers, the technology adds little at best and, at worst, forces solid journalism to take a back seat. ■

How Long (According to The Media) Should Grief Last?



BY ROBERT BAUGHER

Robert Baugher is a teacher, specializing in death education and counseling, in the Department of Psychology at Highline Community College in Des Moines, Washington. This article, with assistance from Dr. T.M. Sell, is based on his two-year study of how selected news outlets — prime-time television newsmagazines, local radio and TV, and his local newspaper, *The Seattle Times* — report on grief reactions to tragic events.

A man whose wife of thirty-five years died twelve months ago does not suddenly walk out his front door today and say, "Okay, I've resolved that issue." Parents whose four-year-old daughter drowned in a swimming pool do not announce five years later,

"We've accepted our daughter's death. It's

okay." Three weeks after the best friend of a fourteen-year-old is shot and killed at her high school, the teenager is not likely to say, "I'm healing." Yet, while a growing number of researchers on loss and bereavement question the use of such words as "acceptance," "healing," "recovery," and "closure," the media continue to use them. This gives the public the false impression that, despite the tragic proportions of the story being told, the grief will soon be over.

For example, a few weeks after the 1998 release of the popular movie *A Civil Action*, an interview appeared in *People* magazine with the mother who blew the whistle on the polluting practices that led to her son's death. The title of the piece was "A Civil Warrior." The blurb, however, revealed the magazine's view of long-term grief: "Still Mourning Her Son's Death After Eighteen Years, an Angry Anne Anderson Fights to Tell Her Side of *A Civil Action*." The story noted: "But it is also painfully clear that Anderson . . . still dwells in grief that no movie can erase." Reread the previous two sentences, this time omitting the word "still." By adding this word, *People* has implied that this mother is somehow not doing something right. Think about the last time someone included the word "still" in a

sentence: "Are you still here?" "You mean you still think that way?" "You mean you're *still* grieving the loss of your son after eighteen years?"

On November 14, 1999, *The Seattle Times* published a follow-up to a tragic story in which a bus rider shot and killed a bus driver, leading to a deadly plunge off a bridge that killed three and injured thirty-two. A picture was shown of the bus driver and his fiancée with the caption, "[They] met on his bus ten years ago and were going to marry May 15. She still grieves the loss of her gentle giant." One year and she's still grieving. Again, in a *Seattle Times* article (August 22, 1999), the sub-head read, FATHER STILL MOURNS LOSS OF HIS SON, 16, TEN YEARS AFTER ATTACK. As before, had the writer chosen to omit one word, judgment of the appropriate length of grief would not have been passed on this father.

Another message from the media is the belief that people who experience the tragic death of their loved ones need to get through it, accept it, recover, and close. In a February 1999 segment of ABC's *20/20*, the reporter said a couple whose six children were killed because of the actions of an illegally licensed driver had turned "their grief into action." What a magic trick! Now you see grief and — voila — it turns into action. The parents of the children who died, anchor Hugh Downs added, are "God-fearing people and they relied on their faith to get them through the loss of their six children." Of course we never actually hear the grieving parents say the words, "get us through the loss of our six children." In fact, in my

twenty years of working with bereaved parents I have never heard a parent say, "I've got to get through the death of my child." As the story continued, another word came up: "But their struggle for acceptance would be disturbed by a series of anonymous phone calls . . ." Few people would dare to ask a bereaved parent, "Have you accepted the death of your child?" Yet the media continue to slip it in.

A February 1999 segment on *48 Hours* featured a mother who successfully waged a twelve-year fight to meet face-to-face with her daughter's murderer, and had gone on to help others in similar situations. The final statement gives us yet another example of the media's own interpretation of grief: "Each one of the victims, like [the mother] is reaching out for remorse, perhaps reconciliation, but especially for recovery," the interview said. "That's 48 Hours for tonight."

Webster's tells us that "heal" means "to restore to health; to cure." It follows that if you are "healing" then you are on your way to being restored to health, cured. How do the media use this word in the context of a report on grief? The day after the Columbine killings, I heard a radio news announcer in his report on the candlelight vigil in Denver assure us that "the healing begins." Is he kidding us? Every bit of research on sudden death, trauma, and critical-incident stress tells us that during the first few days, weeks, perhaps months after a significant death, a person is in shock. Research and anecdotal reports on thoughts and feelings following a major physical injury to the body indicate that the most common

response is a period in which the individual is somewhat numb to the pain, is oblivious to the surroundings, appears to "go through the motions" of responding, and has trouble integrating the loss into present reality. In the context of major emotional injury — the death of a loved one — why would anyone try to impose a healing schema onto a grieving person?

Yet, five days after Columbine a *Dallas Morning News* story assured us that, after the worst high school killings in the history of the United States, "the healing has begun." Certainly most of the students will someday be able to move on from this trauma. But will they all eventually be cured and return to health? Research on similar tragedies suggests not.

There is hope, however, for honest reporting about grief following a tragedy. One of the best examples comes from an April 1999 *Dateline* segment. On the day of the Columbine

The media believe that people who experience the tragic deaths of their loved ones need to get through it, accept it, recover, and close.

killings a *Dateline* reporter, citing the eight high school shootings during the past year and a half, asked, "What may be the long term effects of witnessing something so gruesome? . . . Recent history has taught us the sights and sounds of today may never go away. . . ." A reporter actually used the words, "may never go away." Interviewing a twenty-one-year-old survivor of a similar, decade-old incident on a Stockton, California, playground in which a man with an AK-47 killed five students and injured twenty-nine, the reporter said, "What [this young man] and many other victims of violence are finding is, while the traces of blood may have been easy to wipe away, the emotional scars have been almost impossible to erase." Next we hear the authoritative voice of a psychologist: "Any kind of traumatic, life-altering, life-threatening situation will have effects for many people for the rest of their lives."

Too often, however, it is the bereaved who instruct the reporter in the language of loss. In a July 1998 interview with the widow of a firefighter, who, along with his two partners, died fighting an apartment fire, a *Dateline* reporter made an attempt to summarize the tragedy: ". . . and it almost destroyed your life." This gallant woman — who had just finished baring her soul on national television — caught his intention and immediately responded with the brutal truth: "Well, it *did* destroy my life. This is a different life and this is a different [me]." Bravo!

The reporter on a November 1999 *Dateline* story asked the parents of a young woman who had been murdered seven years before, "You know more than anyone that nothing you do can bring [your daughter] back. Is there a point when you can let it go?" The father replied, "You know, you hear people talk about closure? And — I don't think there will ever be closure because I don't think I'll ever stop missing [my daughter]."

Meanwhile, a reporter in a November 1999 *Dateline* segment declared, "His scars will last for a lifetime." Is this finally an acknowledgment of the potential lifelong effects of a death on survivors? No, it's an investigation of people whose plastic surgery was performed by an unlicensed physician. We seem to have little problem recognizing that physical scars last a lifetime. But what about loss? At the conclusion of a May 1999 *Dateline* investigation, the reporter asked the victim, "Are you going to get over this in a week?" The woman sighed, "No." The reporter, seeming to know the answer, continued, "A month?" The woman's somber reply was the last words we heard, "No. I probably will never get over it." "There," you say, "the media do show some understanding of death and grief." But wait — this was not an interview with a woman who had suffered a death. The woman was discussing her reaction to being the victim of a burglary.

Getting one's house burglarized is a significant loss. The reporter was correct in asking this woman the "Are you going to get over it?" question, correct in acknowledging that, indeed, loss can be something you may never get over. Yet, I ask, when will we see reporters use terms that show the same respect for death? ■

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Blowing the Whistle On Your Own Station



BY LAWRENCE K. GROSSMAN

Lawrence K. Grossman, a former president of NBC News and PBS, is a regular columnist for *CJR*.

To understand why television stations find serious investigative reporting so costly, time-consuming, hard to do, and on occasion intimidating, take a look at the experience of Fox-owned WTVT in Tampa, Florida, and its former investigative

reporters Jane Akre and Steve Wilson. Wilson and Akre are a husband and wife news team who left the station at the end of 1997 amid a cloud of charges, countercharges, and lawsuits. Before Fox bought WTVT from New World Communications, the two reporters had been hired by the previous management as "sweeps people," according to WTVT's news director, Phil Metlin. Akre also functioned for a while as a weekend anchor.

At the station, they spent months working on a major investigative series about the alleged health hazards of synthetic bovine growth hormone, an enormously profitable drug that is injected into cows to enhance their production of milk. Made by Monsanto and marketed under the name Posilac, the drug is given to millions of cows every other week to increase the quantity of their milk by as much as 30 percent. Although it is approved by the Food and Drug Administration, some scientists and environmental and consumer groups, including the Center for Food Safety, charge that BGH-produced milk may cause breast and prostate cancer in humans and that the drug tends to produce infections in cows that require treatment with antibiotics. Traces of the antibiotics can remain in the milk, which, in turn, diminishes their effectiveness in combating infections in people. Canada and the

nations in the European Union prohibit the use of these milk-enhancing drugs.

WTVT heavily promoted the Akre-Wilson milk-contamination pieces for the February 1997 sweeps week. Before they were even completed, however, Monsanto's law firm sent a tough protest letter to Fox News's chairman, Roger Ailes. The letter said Monsanto was "alarmed and deeply concerned" over the coming "assault" on the company's integrity and the integrity of its product. It charged that the journalists had "no scientific competence" and were planning to broadcast "recklessly made accusations." A follow-up letter threatened "dire consequences for Fox News" if it allowed the reporters' "pejorative and defamatory characterizations" to be broadcast.

In the face of those threats, with production of the series still not finished, and with the station's news management raising content questions of its own, WTVT decided to delay the broadcast of Akre's and Wilson's stories. Throughout much of 1997, news director Metlin, together with an army of news editors, station executives, and lawyers, worked with the reporters to try to produce what one lawyer called a fair, accurate, balanced, and verifiable story that would protect the station from "risk or harm caused by inaccuracy, carelessness, lack of balance, or perceived bias." The shots that Monsanto had fired across the station's bow obviously struck home.

Akre and Wilson were convinced that a frightened and intimidated WTVT was forcing them to make misleading alterations and gut their stories to protect Monsanto. They told colleagues in

the Tampa press that the station had caved in to corporate pressure and was trying to silence them. They told the station they would blow the whistle to the FCC about how they were being forced to distort their news reports. On the other hand, the people at WTVT trying to work with the correspondents regarded them, especially Wilson, as combative, contentious, insulting, and unprofessional. The Fox lawyer participating in the editorial review complained to them that they were stating "in almost every way possible that you are fed up with our process of legal and editorial review."

Despite many attempts over many months, no version of Akre's and Wilson's investigative pieces ever succeeded in achieving agreement from both the two reporters and the station management, which had the ultimate responsibility for their content. At the end of 1997, WTVT terminated Akre's and Wilson's contracts and the two filed a novel, and for journalists unprecedented, lawsuit against the station. They sought damages under "Florida's Private-Sector Whistleblower Act." The reporters claimed they had been fired because they threatened to tell the FCC that WTVT was forcing them to produce what they believed to be distorted and misleading news.

A month after Akre and Wilson filed their suit, WTVT did broadcast what seemed to this observer to be a strong and effective three-part investigative series on the subject, produced by a different reporter, Nathan Lang. His series was hardly any different in substance from the versions that Akre and Wilson and the station had been battling over the previous year.

After a five-week trial in state court, the jury awarded Akre \$425,000 on the whistleblowing charge and awarded Wilson nothing. It was a surprising and strangely inconsistent verdict since both husband and wife had presented essentially the same case based on what seemed to be the same facts at the same trial. Both sides are appealing.

Why did the jury say yes to Akre and no to Wilson? After reading the mountain of briefs, transcripts, depositions, script versions, and court documents, I decided that had I been a member of that jury I probably would have reached the same conclusion, odd as it was. Wilson, who served as his own lawyer while Akre had counsel represent her, came across as overly aggressive, a zealot rather than a dispassionate reporter. The jury probably figured that Wilson was eligible to be fired on grounds other than whistleblowing.

Here was a supposedly righteous David, whose suspicion of his bosses' motives, fear of censorship, and passion about what he saw as a major health threat interfered with his professional obligation to present a solid report that all involved could feel comfortable with. But here, too, was the supposedly powerful Goliath — Rupert Murdoch's Fox — unquestionably worried about the "dire consequences" it would suffer if any part of the story were the slightest bit off. The seemingly contradictory, almost Solomonlike verdict actually provided a kind of rough justice.

Meanwhile, Akre and Wilson have won a good deal of sympathetic press coverage for their underdog plight thanks in large part to their Web site (www.foxBGHsuit.com), which states their case and asks for support and contributions. (However, they still have not filed any complaint with the FCC.) The once powerful Monsanto has merged with Pharmacia, a drug company. Its business plan to become the kingpin of the biotech industry has turned into what *The New York Times* recently called a "debacle." The Center for Food Safety and others have intensified their efforts to get the FDA to reverse its approval of the bovine growth hormone. For WTVT news director Metlin, the entire experience "continues to hurt." And Akre and Wilson fear they have become unemployable in TV news. Serious investigative reporting on television, so hard to pull off, remains an endangered species. ■



BY ANDREW KOHUT

Andrew Kohut, director of the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, writes regularly for *CJR* about public attitudes toward the media.

The People, the Press, and the Pulpit

The increasingly important role of religion in public life presents a challenge for the press.

The media have particularly low credibility in this area — even journalists themselves have doubts about their ability to cover religious issues. Public and

press concerns reflect a huge but

familiar gap: on the one hand, the American public is one of the most religious in the West. At the same time, there are more than a few non-believers in the nation's newsrooms. This is nothing new, but it looms as a larger problem given the emerging prominence of subjects such as President Bush's proposal to provide federal funding to "faith-based" organizations, and other political and policy questions related to organized religion.

A recent Public Agenda Foundation survey found 44 percent of the public saying that the media's coverage of religion is worse than its handling of other subjects. In a separate survey, journalists concurred.

The public's specific complaints about press coverage of religion are unremarkable and could be applied to press treatment of any institution or facet of American life. But these specific criticisms are far less important than the perception that journalists are on the other side of a cultural divide that prevents them from "getting it" when it comes to religion.

A Research Center study in the mid-1990s found nearly 60 percent of the public thinking the personal values of journalists make it difficult for them to

understand and cover such things as religion and family values. A companion study found about four in ten journalists saying this is a valid criticism. The more recent Public Agenda survey showed 56 percent of its general public respondents agreeing with the statement that too many journalists have a built-in bias against religion. And there was also a fair degree of press concurrence — as many as 46 percent of the media respondents thought that too many members of the press had an anti-religion bias.

Religious people see the news media as key players in a national culture that does not reflect — or respect — their views and values. Fully 68 percent of Evangelical Christians surveyed by Public Agenda said they thought that people with their religious beliefs were discriminated against! A 1996 Gallup poll found 60 percent of Americans describing the "governing elite," including the mass media, as not very religious.

The increased blurring of the church-state divide in the current administration raises many important questions worthy of journalistic scrutiny, but it will be tough for the press to achieve credibility in this area. Many Americans express worries about too much religious influence on politics and governance and they will look to the press to cover this debate and ask the hard questions. Obviously, the media cannot back off in pursuing this story but it must approach it with sensitivity, while exploring one of the touchiest subjects in our society.

Put on your helmets! ■

There's No Business Like Your Own Newspaper's Business



BY GENEVA OVERHOLSER

Geneva Overholser (genevaoh@aol.com), a syndicated columnist for The Washington Post Writers Group, writes regularly for *QJR* about newspapers. Among positions she has held are editorial writer for *The New York Times*, editor of *The Des Moines Register*, and ombudsman for *The Washington Post*. She also served nine years on the Pulitzer Prize board.

Quick: Name a business that newspapers cover really badly. You're thinking maybe something very new, a trade we know little about? How about a different candidate: us. When it comes to businesses that get skimpy, even cowardly, business coverage, the newspaper industry — our own newspapers in particular — surely belongs among the candidates.

Think about it. In any town, by any measure, the newspaper is an important business. It shapes its community in many different ways every day. It is largely responsible for what people know and don't know. And it has a huge impact on other businesses, too, through its advertising practices as well as through its reporting on them.

Given all that, would you say your business staff is as dogged about chasing down information from your publisher and corporate executives as it is about chasing down that same information from your town's utility execs, bankers, department store managers, and car dealers? Think how often we remind ourselves to "follow the money" in our reporting, whether it's on businesses, politics, or almost any institution. But put "money" together with "us," and what's our instinct? "Avert your eyes." When it comes to other important businesses in town, we hound the c.e.o. to tell us whatever he will about any change in business priorities. Or about the grounds on which an important investment decision was made. Or about profit levels, or executive salary packages. But when it comes to us? We don't even break our

own paper's profit margins out of the indecipherable corporate annual report — assuming we run the annual report at all.

Show me the newspaper that explains how much of the executive editor's salary-and-benefits package is now tied to the newspaper's financial performance. Isn't that a subject of some interest to the public, given the editor's impact on their lives?

Or how about a good, in-depth look at the decision-making process a newspaper goes through when it raises ad rates? Picture a story rich with detail on how the paper's executives balance newsprint price hikes, circulation goals — and of course those profit numbers, looming over everything. Most unlikely, right? But not because the ad rates don't have considerable power over other businesses' plans and performance. And certainly not because it wouldn't be of terrific interest to the community.

Or how about newsroom workforce stories? Chances are we're all pretty thorough in covering teachers' salaries, a subject of importance to the community, since teachers determine what our kids learn. Well, don't reporters and editors determine, in large part, what all of us learn? How many papers have taken a thorough look at what's been happening with journalism salaries? For example, several years ago, when Michigan State University surveyed starting pay in thirty-nine occupations, did we take note that journalism came in thirty-seventh, below even the oft-lamented salaries of kindergarten teachers?

Or take the shape of the newspaper itself. If we redesign the pa-

per, we're only too happy to talk about it — often in a full-blown separate section. But nip and tuck the newshole, and we probably don't feel the need to let readers know. The same sort of thing occurs when we go to a new page size. We're eager to tell them about the sleek modern look of it, the greater convenience for mass-transit riders. The fact that they won't be getting quite as much news today as yesterday — or that the company will save millions next year on newsprint — doesn't get quite the same prominence.

If we're poor at covering ourselves, do others fill in the gaps? I recently spoke to a group of reporters from business publications in cities up and down the East Coast, and asked them if they were giving newspapers in their towns coverage anywhere near comparable to that given other large businesses. Almost all said they cover the paper only very rarely. A couple of them said that they had occasionally tried, but found news executives among the most secretive and resistant to news coverage that they ever encountered.

Increasingly it seems to be local alternative publications that are covering newspapers most aggressively. The *New Times* in Phoenix, say, writing about what's going on with *The Arizona Republic*, or the *New Jersey Monthly* on the *Asbury Park Press*. And, interestingly enough, this coverage is far more widely disseminated than it has ever been, thanks to the Internet. On Web sites like www.poynter.org/medianews and www.journalism.org, stories about staff cuts or the addition of front-page ads get picked up from publications that would never before

have been read beyond their city or state boundaries — and they are eagerly passed around and gossiped over.

You could call this a kind of samizdat, after the Soviet-era self-published information that made the rounds in the days when anything not officially sanctioned had to travel underground. Whenever I write in my syndicated column about the effects of corporatization, waves of “downsizing,” the manner in which papers handle page-size or the like, the number of papers that actually publish the column seems to plummet. But then I hear from news staffers across the country that the column was posted on their newsroom bulletin board, or spread like wildfire on the computer system.

Why is what gets into our newspapers so narrow? Sometimes the cause is obvious: Corporate executives don't want news about a new printing plant affecting the real estate market before the land is bought.

Editors don't want to make life miserable for the publisher. Publishers don't want to tick off corporate. What editor wants to send out word on a decrease in her training budget, or the fact that all the new newshole is going to subjects tied to classified ads? And perhaps we let ourselves off the hook by telling each other we don't have any credibility when reporting on ourselves anyway.

Why then *should* we be doing it? Because the public is affected by what we do. Because informing others keeps us (and our owners) honest, and befits a trade that prides itself on truth-telling. Because it would be consistent with the way we treat others. And also because it's a smart thing to do. When we conduct our own business undercover, we lack some of the information we'd get if we were more open. We decide minority markets aren't desirable to advertisers — and find out after we've made some poor choices that in fact minority markets tend to have high proportions of consumer-goods purchasers. Soft news becomes the faddish prescription for winning new readers — until years later, when we realize we've been disappointing the real franchise, hard-news consumers. Opening ourselves to scrutiny could produce the debate that would make us better and stronger, faster. This is the kind of thing we tell others all the time. If we acted on it within our own businesses, perhaps we'd see how right we are. ■

“Red Tape Holds Up New Bridge” and More Flubs From the Nation's Press



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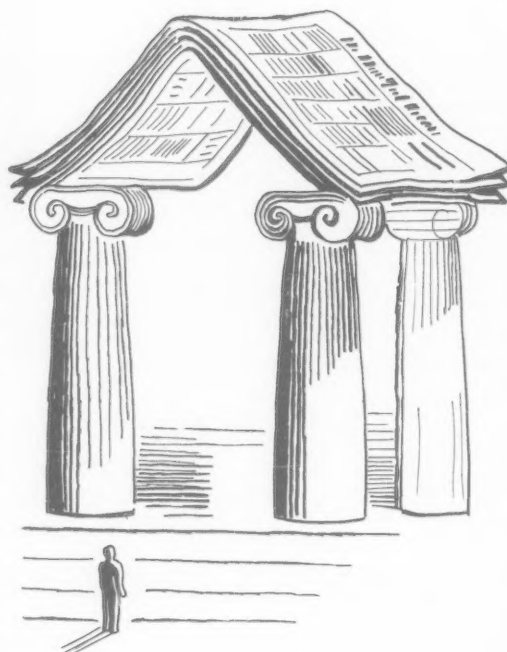
BOOKS

The Legends Between the Lines

BY CHRISTOPHER HANSON

After only a few months on the job, many reporters find themselves asking: *Haven't I written this story before?* After they've been reporting a bit longer, many sense that a small reservoir of standard narratives shapes the stories they write — and that a tiny troupe of stock characters (heroes, villains, victims, knaves, wise men, buffoons, soothsayers) is type-cast repeatedly in tales of sport, crime, war, disaster, and politics. As the journalists sit at the keyboard, it's as if Ouija is forcing their fingers along worn pathways. Tornadoes inevitably sound like freight trains as they rip through trailer parks, nature punishing the poor and ill-prepared. Mass murderers must be quiet loners, living on tree-shaded streets with well-manicured lawns, where their neighbors describe them as polite young men who helped them carry in the groceries. Winners of the New Hampshire presidential primary (Tsongas, Buchanan, McCain, whoever) must be tagged as giant killers, whose stunning upset victories against front-runners' well-oiled political machines have upended the contest.

Most journalists who recognize the tendency to recycle old material probably chalk it up to professional routines, deadline pressures, the expectations of editors, and limited imagination. Jack Lule, a *Philadelphia Inquirer* reporter turned Lehigh University professor, goes further. He argues in *Daily News, Eternal Stories* that the journalistic imperative to tell old tales stems from a deep and abiding human hunger for narratives that re-teach basic lessons, informing and instructing even as they entertain and titil-



late. Lule is the latest in a line of scholars who call such stories modern myths. "The daily news," he writes, "is the primary vehicle for myth in our times."

His use of the term "myth" is likely to raise the hackles of hard-bitten reporters

**DAILY NEWS, ETERNAL STORIES:
THE MYTHOLOGICAL
ROLE OF JOURNALISM**
BY JACK LULE

THE GUILFORD PRESS. 245 PP.
\$35.00; \$17.95 PAPER

who insist that their currency is fact, not falsehood. But Lule is not talking about falsehood. He is using a widely accepted scholarly definition of myth as a recurrent, archetypal story that purports to describe reality and offers "exemplary" mod-

els that "represent shared values, confirm core beliefs... provide examples of good and evil, right and wrong, bravery and cowardice." A myth, in this light, can in theory be true, or partly true. Its underlying function, however, is not to convey facts, but rather to reinforce some widely shared sense of the order of things.

Among the examples that Lule employs is the myth of The Flood. Once told by scores of ancient civilizations, this myth has found its way more recently into *The New York Times* (the book's main fount of journalistic examples) in a 1998 account of how Hurricane Mitch devastated Central America. In the ancient versions, including the Bible's tale of Noah, mankind strays from the right path and suffers divine punishment in the form of a terrible, cleansing flood. Far from giving a dry factual account, *The New York Times* retold this tale of human folly and holy

retribution in very familiar terms. Lule summarizes the *Times* account this way:

"Impoverished people erected poorly built homes dangerously close to rivers or precariously perched on mountain slopes — areas forsaken by the wealthier classes and corporations. The nations' leaders looked away. A hurricane came from the east. Rain fell for days. Floods and great mountains of mud swept away entire villages. Thousands of people died. The scene was a vision out of Dante, a deluge of biblical proportions, the *Times* reported. 'It's a punishment from God,' said an elderly Honduran carpenter on the front page of the *Times*."

On one level, according to Lule, the *Times* was providing accurate information. But on another, probably unconscious level, it was recreating a myth. By

tapping into the ancient narrative structure of the flood, it retaught some old lessons: show foresight and compassion or you will suffer the wrath of the heavens, a "punishment from God."

Variations of this basic narrative have been used repeatedly in news accounts of natural disasters (including tornadoes in trailer parks).

Not all journalism derives from myth, Lule is quick to point out. A typical weather report is not *The Flood*. But he does find a range of myths lurking in human interest stories, accounts of sensational trials, crimes, and ceremonies. One such myth is *The Good Mother*, an archetypal nurturing figure, often portrayed making great sacrifices for others. Lule describes how coverage of Mother Teresa in the *Times* and elsewhere retells the myth in modern guise, painting the nun in shades of one-dimensional purity.

Another recurrent myth, he says, is that of *The Hero* — the person of humble origins who ventures from home, overcomes prodigious challenges and then returns triumphant, a model for others. As a contemporary example, Lule cites the *New York Times* coverage of Mark McGwire, who broke Roger Maris's home run record in 1998. He was described by the paper as "Atlas-like," meeting "Herculean" demands with a "Paul Bunyan swing" while exemplifying such virtues as hard work, strength, and generosity. The media made him a living myth.

Lule's notion of news as myth seems plausible, but why should the working journalist care? Perhaps because self-awareness might make for better work. If we understand that eternal stories keep tugging at our sleeves, we might think twice before yielding to the tugs. We might stop to remember that when we pour new facts into an old mold, the facts that don't fit are spilled away. Thus, as the *Times* poured its Mother Teresa information into the Good Mother mold, the paper — according to Lule — all but ignored complaints that the nun's rigid opposition to birth control might actually have contributed to the plight of the poor. It all but ignored complaints that her rigid support of Catholic doctrine on the subordination of women undermined the struggle for gender equality.

And so it was with *Times* coverage of the 1989 murder of Huey Newton, according to the book. The former Black Panther leader was many conflicting things to many people — bold dissident or dangerous radical; effective civil rights advocate or media hound whose efforts

had no lasting results; "street thug" or up-from-poverty Ph.D. role model. According to Lule, the *Times* ignored this varied picture to focus on Newton's criminal record. Lule argues that the *Times* was in effect repeating the ancient Myth of the Scapegoat, which tells "in dramatic fashion what happens to those who challenge or ignore social beliefs."

The mythic treatment of Newton illustrates a larger point, according to the book: myths tend to reinforce the social order; when journalists retell myths in the news, they are usually coming down on the side of order against dissent and defiance. Lule bases his analysis on the writings of the social critic Kenneth Burke, who maintained that human life consists of perpetual "social dramas" that reinforce the prevailing order. Every day, for instance, there are countless dramas of sanction for those who defy the rules — anything from breaching office dress codes to robbing banks. Those dramas are enacted not only in courts and bosses' offices but also in the news.

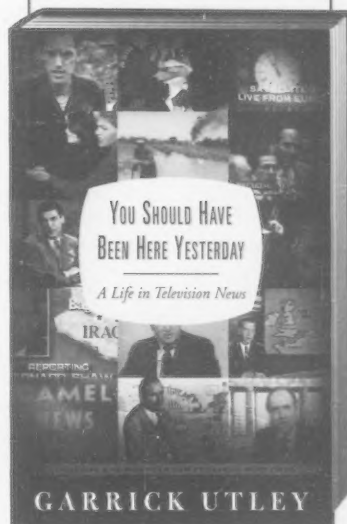
If Lule and Burke are correct, the implications are sobering for those who regard the watchdog function of the press as crucial. If the overwhelming pressure on media is to bolster the status quo, then it is difficult indeed for news outlets to challenge the powers that be in any fundamental sense. Reporters who do so are displaying more grit than one might have imagined, for they are running the risk of being sanctioned and marginalized in their own "social drama."

Daily News, Eternal Stories is so provocative and readable that I would recommend it to news practitioners and undergraduates — but with some reservations.

For one thing, Lule's theory of news-as-myth is not a very precise instrument for explaining why a particular news story is written the way it is. Consider again the disparaging portrayal of Newton. The Scapegoat myth might help account for the coverage, but so might other factors: unconscious racism or stereotyping, for instance, or a prevailing newsroom ideology that does not tolerate violent or radical dissent. Lule acknowledges that these other, non-mythic factors must be taken into account, but his analysis leaves the reader wondering just how important, relatively speaking, is the power of myth in explaining the news. It is certainly possible that the choice of the Scapegoat narrative for Newton, rather than some other narrative (The Martyr?) was driven by prejudice or ideology. If so, then the pow-

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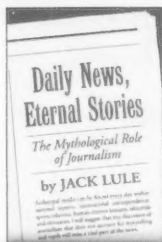
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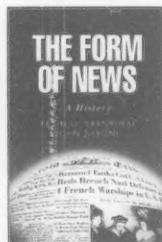
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er of myth in the news is subordinate to other forces and less determinative than Lule seemingly wants to argue.

Another problem is that the book does not hang together as well as it might, as often happens with one assembled from a series of journal articles. Lule attempts to unify those articles with an over-arching three-part argument that unfortunately does not jell. His first point is reasonable enough — the news business is in crisis. The crisis is evidenced by public disgust with, among other things, "sensationalism, tawdry gossip, and lack of fairness" and a neglect of weighty subjects in favor of "tabloid drama, such as celebrity trials and the sex lives of politicians."

It is on his second point that Lule goes astray. He argues that the crisis stems from journalists' embracing "the notion of news as information. We deprecate storytelling. And now news has become less valuable, less central. News will survive if we truly recognize the significance and implications of storytelling... [N]ews will remain a subject of crisis and concern as long as we stray from story." These assertions are puzzling in that key causes he cites for the news crisis — sensationalism, tabloid drama, etc. — stem from the compulsion to tell good stories rather than from any impulse to avoid them. Indeed, Lule's second point is contradicted by the bulk of his book, which details the persistent power of storytelling in the news.

Lule's third point is that greater stress on the storytelling and mythic functions of news will help in quelling the news crisis. Here he is frustratingly vague, stating: "I don't know precisely how story and myth might ultimately be used to address the current crisis in journalism. I do know that any attempt to address the crisis that does not recognize the mythological role of journalism is destined to fail."

Daily News, Eternal Stories is best read by taking its introductory and concluding sections with a grain of salt and focusing on the case studies in between. The book's insight that daily news can derive unconsciously from myth should be empowering to any reporter who seeks greater control over the craft. If journalists are to retell eternal stories, they should at least make a conscious, considered choice of which models to use. ■

CJR contributing editor Christopher Hanson, a print journalist for twenty years, teaches journalism at the University of Maryland.

"Chicken Noodle News"?

BY NEIL HICKEY

"We will stay on the air till the end of the world and then we will cover the story and sign off playing 'Nearer My God to Thee.'" That's the mission statement Ted Turner offered to anybody who'd listen when CNN was being launched almost twenty-one years ago. So far, the all-news cable network is on track to keep its founder's promise. It reaches more than a billion people worldwide in twelve languages and employs 150 full-fledged correspondents in forty-two cities — more than ABC, CBS, NBC, and Fox combined. For most of those two decades, CNN has been a major destination for viewers when big stories happen: the Gulf war, the death of Princess Diana, John F. Kennedy Jr.'s plane crash, the disputed 2000 presidential election.

CNN had a monopoly on national cable news before MSNBC (a joint effort of NBC and Microsoft) came along in July 1996, followed that same year by Rupert Murdoch's Fox News Channel. Those networks' growing influence and popularity, along with CNN's own sclerosis

ME AND TED AGAINST THE WORLD: THE UNAUTHORIZED STORY OF THE FOUNDING OF CNN

BY REESE SCHONFELD
HARPERCOLLINS. 407 PP. \$26

and declining audience, led to the events of mid-January when an internal CNN memo announced a "long overdue . . . radical transformation" in which 400 staffers were fired — some of them being led ignominiously back to their desks by security officers and told to pack up and be off the premises within the hour.

The arc of CNN's tumultuous story is described with zest, lamentation, humor, bile, and more than a soupçon of score-settling and self-justification by Reese Schonfeld in *Me and Ted Against the World: the Unauthorized Story of the Founding of CNN*. The book went to press before the firings, and before AOL and Time Warner (which has owned CNN since 1996) won regulators' approval for a merger that makes CNN a mere cog in the world's largest media machine, and which renders Ted Turner — who expended sweat, blood, and a

major fortune bringing his brainchild to maturity — a forlorn empty-nester.

Turner asked Schonfeld in 1978 if an all-news cable channel was feasible, and if he'd create it. Schonfeld answered yes and yes. He'd been knocking around the newsreel and TV news business since the 1950s and was ready for the main chance. On paper (but only on paper), he and Turner were well-matched. Both had enormous energy and a buccaneer spirit. Turner had been tossed out of Brown University for having a girl in his room; Schonfeld got kicked out of Harvard Law for gambling. Turner was a champion sailboat racer, winner of the America's Cup; Schonfeld, while an undergraduate at Dartmouth, was a national collegiate bridge champion. Turner cared nothing about television news, and decided on a news channel only because other cable entrepreneurs had coopted movies, sports, and sitcom reruns. Schonfeld was a devout theorist and practitioner of the newsgathering crafts.

Turner informed Schonfeld that CNN "is going to make us the two most powerful men in the world." There was one hitch. Turner had no money. No spending money, anyway. His assets were a tangle of indebtedness. While he begged and borrowed, Schonfeld went ahead and set up headquarters in a derelict Atlanta building that once was a Russian-Jewish country club. He imported a hundred workers under twenty-five years of age to labor in grunt jobs for low, earn-while-you-learn, non-union wages, which turned the CNN offices into a hotbed of sex, drugs, and rock 'n' roll. Casting about for staffers with some experience, he landed Daniel Schorr, Bernard Shaw, Mary Alice Williams, Bill Zimmerman, Kathleen Sullivan, Lou Dobbs, Mike Boettcher, Myron Kandel, Dan Dorfman, Jim Miklaszewski, Robin Leach, and a twenty-three-year-old Katie Couric.

By launch day, June 1, 1980, Turner had expended \$34.5 million in start-up costs, and was panicked about CNN's prospects. Writes Schonfeld: "He was going into a business he never liked, and about which he knew little. He had every right to be scared. Hell, I was scared, and I knew what I was doing." Back then, less than 20 percent of U.S. homes had cable, and CNN was in only 1.7 million of those — less than the 3.5 million Turner had

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MISCELLANEOUS

"FOLLOW THE MONEY," Deep Throat instructed. "It's The Economy, Stupid!" James Carville advised. Take their advice — and study business journalism in NYC. Master the fundamentals. Develop a beat. Study full-time or part-time with expert journalists at Baruch College/CUNY. Fellowships available. Admission spring or fall. For information, contact the Master's Program in Business Journalism. 212 802-6640 or Joshua_Mills@baruch.cuny.edu

promised advertisers. Nineteen-eighty was a presidential election year, and CNN charged into the gladiatorial arena against the three established broadcast networks. At the party conventions in Detroit and New York, anchorman Shaw occupied a tiny open booth near the rafters, and was careful not to lean back in his chair lest he fall a hundred feet into the audience. Politicians declined to be interviewed because they'd never heard of CNN. One CNN staffer called the convention coverage "a four-car pile-up."

But Turner, despite his panic, was undeterred. At a luncheon interview with editors of *The New York Times*, his opening shot was: "Don't you know we are going to

bury you?" The *Times* was putting out a paper for tomorrow, he told them. "We're putting our news out for today." The *Times* editors scrutinized him as if he were a side dish of macaroni they hadn't ordered. The revelation — for them and everyone else — lay a few years ahead that 24-hour cable news would change everything. Broadcast journalists contemptuously called CNN "Chicken Noodle News," and excluded it from pool coverage until Turner sued and won a partial victory.

There was plenty of breaking news in those first, frantic years: President Reagan, the pope, and John Lennon were shot; Iran released the hostages; Solidarity was a big story in Europe; Argentina

grabbed the Falkland Islands; the Columbia space shuttle went aloft; boatloads of Cubans landed in Key West; the U.S. sent troops to El Salvador. CNN was way out front on the AIDS story. Pat Buchanan and Tom Braden debuted a new kind of televised donkeybrook called *Crossfire*.

Schonfeld was tireless in whipping his sometimes mutinous troops into a coherent news organization. He once bawled out Katie Couric, then a field producer, for missing a vital element of an important story. "You got foreplay, you got post-coitus, you missed the climax," he hollered. Couric responded: "You mean all I got was a quick feel, wet sheets, and a cigarette?" He knew then, says Schonfeld, that she was "destined for greatness."

Schonfeld is exaggerating only slightly when he claims that within two years of its launch CNN became a major force in journalism. Cable audiences began to realize that, night or day, this new, revolutionary service was there for a quick fill-in on news of the nation and the world. It had no competition. The World Wide Web was a dozen years in the future; MSNBC and Fox News Channel were not yet on the drawing boards. The broadcast networks' evening news ratings already were in decline. The future was bright.

At that moment, Ted Turner fired Schonfeld. "Right in the middle of a winning streak." He was driving the staff too hard, Turner claimed; the on-screen talent hated him; he wasn't delegating authority. An unnamed talent agent had been "whispering into Ted's ear" that Schonfeld wasn't fair to his clients. Turner reversed some of Schonfeld's personnel decisions, making it impossible for him to remain as president and c.e.o. of the network. At root, the problem was the clash of two considerable egos.

Turner had always kept a sign on his desk that read: "Lead, Follow, or Get Out of the Way." Writes Schonfeld: "Ted wasn't going to let me lead, I wasn't going to follow him, so I got out of the way."

CNN's ratings took a 20 percent tumble in the succeeding seven months. The ever-unpredictable, often erratic Turner asked Schonfeld to return, but he did not. Schonfeld is at pains to point out that in the eighteen years since his departure, CNN's audience has declined 70 percent.

Reviewing CNN's performance during that period, Schonfeld has harsh words for its current leader, Tom Johnson, who presided over CNN's blackest hour — the 1998 Operation Tailwind documentary, which claimed that U.S. forces used poison gas in Laos during the Vietnam war. The

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network subsequently disowned the program and apologized for running it. A news executive should not green-light a documentary and then fail to back up his producers, Schonfeld says. (Nonetheless, had he been running CNN, the Tailwind piece never would have gone on the air. "History should be left to historians.") With Johnson, he writes, Turner had achieved his dream: "He had gotten a president of CNN who knew less about news than he did."

For all its tendentiousness, *Me and Ted* is a necessary, irresistible read for anybody interested in cable news from its Big Bang in 1980 to the present. It belongs on the shelf with *It Ain't As Easy As It Looks* by Porter Bibb; *CNN: The Inside Story* by Hank Whittemore; *Ted Turner, The Man Behind the Mouth* by Roger Vaughan; *Lead, Follow or Get Out of the Way* by Christian Williams; and *Citizen Turner: the Wild Rise of an American Tycoon* by Robert Goldberg and Gerald Jay Goldberg. Soon to join those: a CNN history by Peter Arnett and Ed Turner (the latter a former CNN executive unrelated to Ted, and also a target of Schonfeld's barbs).

The author brooks no uncertainty as regards his legacy. "I am the creator of CNN as it appears on the air," he is still reminding us, as late as page 382. "I designed CNN's content, format, and schedule. I recognized the promise of live news. I hired the executives who ran CNN for a generation. I hired the anchors and reporters. I originated the 'CNN look.' I selected the technical equipment . . . I developed and purchased our computerized newsroom. I selected and leased the sites of the CNN bureaus . . . I devised a so far union-proof employment system . . . I knew where news was going . . . I was a news professional."

Some fact-checking and pencil editing would have improved *Me and Ted*. The prose roams from past tense to present, sometimes in the same sentence. ("I did not regard SNC as a serious contender, but the banks do," he writes of a news channel that failed.) And: it's Bryant Gumbel, Paul Begala, Geraldine Laybourne, Stan Optowsky, not Gumble, Begalla, Leybourne, Optowsky. Geostationary satellites hang 25,000 miles over the equator, not 250,000.


A more politic author might have chosen another publisher than Rupert Murdoch's HarperCollins lest the suspicious see the book as a torpedo aimed at Fox News Channel's main competitor. CNN, he writes, is "sluggish and constipated," "worldwide and skin-deep," its "promise" never fulfilled. Ted Turner is "a sad, almost tragic figure."

Thoughtfully, Schonfeld has created a Web site (www.MeandTed.com) for readers whose hunger for news of CNN and himself is unappeased by the book, and to answer questions (he provides a few) that were unresolved when it went to press: "Will the AOL/Time Warner merger go through?" (It did.) "Will Ted buy NBC?" (Not so far.) "Will Tom Johnson keep his job?" (No word on that.) "Will Reese Schonfeld ever get back in the news business?" (After this book, that's a tough one.)

For all of CNN's current structural, programming, and audience woes (its 2000 election night coverage was "a debacle," according to a CNN-sponsored inde-

pendent study), the network is still the benchmark in cable news. Turner and Schonfeld created something new under the sun, back there in 1980, and journalism hasn't been the same since. In the hours before CNN's launch, Schonfeld mused that "from this day forth, presidents and kings, prime ministers and foreign ministers, the Pentagon, Congress, the media, the public, would have to adjust to CNN." He was correct. While other cable networks have competed successfully for the domestic audience, CNN remains a global presence unmatched in television news. ■

Neil Hickey is *CJR's* editor at large.




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BY JAMES BOYLAN

FEAR AND LOATHING IN AMERICA: THE BRUTAL ODYSSEY OF AN OUTLAW JOURNALIST 1968-1976

By Hunter S. Thompson; foreword by David Halberstam; edited by Douglas Brinkley
Simon & Schuster. 756 pp. \$30

Here is the frenzied Dr. Thompson — scourge of all pretension — dressed up between hard covers, introduced by a mainstream journalist, edited by a major historian, and annotated down to the slightest detail; even Hitler and Mussolini are identified in a footnote. The raw meat of the volume comprises Thompson's previously unpublished business correspondence — his garrulous struggle to win his way as a vendor of Gonzo journalism and to try to remain at least barely solvent. Many of the items are sales letters; that is, a show in the rugged, abusive, meandering Thompson manner as a preview of the story he intends to write; nearly as many are dunning letters, demanding payment for work and expenses. He is most reflective in his letters to Jim Silberman of Random House, to whom he promised a book to be called "The Death of the American Dream," which became diffused into his "Fear and Loathing" books on Las Vegas and the 1972 campaign and his prolific political journalism. He makes to Silberman the damaging admission that he was not, in fact, on drugs when he covered Las Vegas; he just tried to write that way. The last letter to Silberman serves, by indirection, as a summing-up — "I'm about 98 percent happy with whatever ripples I caused in the great swamp of history." But of course this is not the end; it is the only the second of three planned volumes.

THE ELEMENTS OF JOURNALISM: WHAT NEWSPeOPLE SHOULD KNOW AND THE PUBLIC SHOULD EXPECT

By Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel
Crown. 208 pp. \$20

Bill Kovach is the chairman of the Committee of Concerned Journalists. Tom Rosenstiel is the director of the Project for Excellence in Journal-

ism. The CCJ is a subsidiary of the PEJ, which is one of many projects funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts, and the whole coalition is devoted to the reform and improvement of American journalism. This book was generated by the forums that CCJ has held across the country since its founding in 1997, as well as PEJ surveys, some of which have appeared in CJR. Despite a perhaps unavoidable blandness from boiling down so much material, *The Elements of Journalism* is a useful work. It offers a contemporary restatement of principles put forth by the Hutchins Commission more than fifty years ago of journalism's obligations to remain truthful, independent, open, and, not least, interesting. The final principle offered is that "practitioners must be allowed to exercise their personal conscience" — even, it is implied, in defiance of employers' policies. This is the freshest and most controversial element in the discussion, and Kovach and Rosenstiel are to be commended for raising it, even as cautiously as they do.

AHEAD OF TIME: MY EARLY YEARS AS A FOREIGN CORRESPONDENT

By Ruth Gruber
Carroll & Graf. 319 pp. \$14

In February, a fictionalized Ruth Gruber was portrayed in a CBS docudrama shepherding a thousand refugees to the United States during World War II. The real Ruth Gruber, at the age of eighty-nine, remains a vigorous practicing journalist. That energy is evident in this memoir of her first quarter century, initially published in 1991 and now reissued. She had a breathless early career, every step of which astonished or appalled her Brooklyn family: to New York University and the University of Wisconsin; to Cologne where she won a doctorate that made her what the newspapers called the world's youngest Ph.D. and where, as a Jew, she first encountered Nazism; to Russia with credentials from the *New York Herald Tribune*, where she became the first foreign correspondent to reach the Soviet Arctic. All of this is presented as if she had just returned from Yakutsk, and who cares if she pretends to quote long-ago conversations word for word? It all rings true.

SECRETS OF VICTORY: THE OFFICE OF CENSORSHIP AND THE AMERICAN PRESS AND RADIO IN WORLD WAR II

By Michael S. Sweeney
The University of North Carolina Press.
274 pp. \$49.95. \$18.95 paper

Typically of the cagey Franklin D. Roosevelt, he named an executive of The Associated Press to head the Office of Censorship during World War II. Perhaps nobody but Byron Price could have handled so well the ambiguities of voluntary suppression of the news — of censoring while pretending not to censor. Even given a generally acquiescent press, Price had a struggle persuading newspapers to keep secrets, keeping a lid on such scoop-hungry commentators as Drew Pearson, and steering clear of the propaganda business. Michael S. Sweeney, a professor at Utah State University, has told the story well, while indirectly showing how government can control the news media with a velvet glove.

FAME AT LAST: WHO WAS WHO ACCORD- ING TO THE NEW YORK TIMES OBITUARIES

By John C. Ball and Jill Jones
Andrews McMeel. 407 pp. \$24.95

The authors, a professor of medicine and a free-lance writer, had the idea of applying the ruler to a six-year slice (1993-1999) of *New York Times* obituaries (9,325 articles) as an index of — well, what? — celebrity, achievement, notoriety, status, or a mixture? The tale is in the numbers, rather than in the innocuous text. The longest obituary in those six years, no surprise, was Richard Nixon's (510 inches), more than twice as large as numbers 2 and 3, Frank Sinatra and Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis. No person younger than 63 (Mickey Mantle) made the top twenty-five. The book offers categorized "Apex of Fame" tables — African-Americans, led by Ella Fitzgerald; physicians: Dr. Spock; literary figures: Allen Ginsberg; members of Congress: Barry Goldwater; actors: James Stewart, Jessica Tandy. Finally, the most overrepresented occupational groups: writers, artists, entertainers, athletes... and college professors.

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A Different Kind of Lesson

BY FLOYD ABRAMS

When Vice President Al Gore's first class at the Columbia Graduate School of Journalism was about to begin, the press was interested in what he would say. When it was announced that what he would say would be off the record, the press was no longer merely interested. It was appalled, mortified, convulsed. To put it another way, it was delighted.

For here was a story far better than anything Gore could possibly offer students. A past and perhaps future presidential candidate speaking off-the-record to students? A *journalism* school permitting him to do so?

Within a day, the inevitable announcement was made that students could indeed tell anyone — even journalists — what Professor Gore had to say. Nothing was off the record, everything on. Predictably enough, little was then written about what Gore did say.

There must be a few lessons to be drawn from this and I offer a few (more abstract than not). First, the effort to prevent disclosure of what Gore had to say was doomed from the start. He was — he still is — far too important. What he says anywhere is potentially newsworthy. What he says to students about covering campaigns may be especially so. The very notion, then, of silencing students about what they heard in Gore's class was a non-starter, an impossibility.

Suppose, to pick another name out of the hat, former President Clinton agreed to make the short trip from his new Harlem offices to Columbia to teach. Is it even conceivable that what he said to hundreds of students could possibly be treated as confidential? No one would try and no one should have tried with Gore.

At the same time, the notion that what a teacher says to students should be treated as if it were a public address is a seri-



Al Gore, Columbia's visiting professor of journalism

ous one. A classroom is not a political convention. An effort to teach students is not supposed to be the same as one to persuade prospective voters.

When William F. Buckley, Jr. sprang upon the world stage a half-century ago with *God and Man at Yale*, a denunciation of his undergraduate professors for their supposed godlessness, he quoted at length from the notes he took in his classes. His professors were appalled. They had understood (without quite understanding how to explain it) that everything they said in class was between them and their students and, in that sense, off the record. Did Buckley's extended quotations from his notes change the tone, if not the substance, of what they said to their students in the future? Or their sense of what a classroom was? Can you doubt it?

Russell Baker once conjured up the single course to be taught in his ideal journalism school. As Tom

Wicker later recalled it, Baker's school would require each student to stand in front of a closed door for six hours, after which an official would emerge and utter two words — "no comment." The exam would be for the student to then write 600 words on deadline.

The journalists who covered the Gore-Columbia flap had more to work with. But the students who observed them at work — some screaming, others offering money to students to reveal what Gore said, many grossly exaggerating the story — may learn a useful lesson from what they saw.

Professor Gore may have much to teach his students. But the journalists who sought to cover Professor Gore may have taught them far more. ■

Floyd Abrams is the William J. Brennan, Jr. Visiting Professor on First Amendment Law at the Columbia Graduate School of Journalism.

AP/WIDE WORLD/ACN/REXHA

The Lower case

Clinton honors missing

The Arizona Republic 11/19/00

Microsoft accuses federal judge of being impartial

The Appeal-Democrat (Marysville, Calif.) 11/28/00

Cop accused of forcing women to strip suspended

The Sheboygan (Wis.) Press 1/6/01

Some public unions find happily ever after

Statesman Journal (Salem, Oreg.) 2/25/00

Older Americans Act Renewed

Not Born Yesterday! (La Canada, Calif.) January 2001

Neuroscientists discover disgusting regions of the brain

The Lancet 10/21/00

High court OKs extra time for sex crimes

Daily Breeze (Torrance, Calif.) 1/18/01

Stewart is felt all over

The Sacramento Bee 6/13/00



BY RICHARD JONES—SNAPPS FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

CORRECTIONS

The giant pandas coming to the National Zoo were misidentified in a caption with a Nov. 19 front-page photo, which is reproduced above. Tian Tian, the male is on the left. Mei Xiang, the female, is on the right.

The Washington Post 11/21/00

Genetically modified crops talk of meeting

The News Gazette (Champaign, Ill.) 1/21/01

Deer kill opponents gaining influence

Chicago Tribune 1/6/00

UConn education program is makes some top grades

The Advocate (Stamford, Conn.) 7/11/00

What The Observer Uncovered In Charlotte

Was A Criminal Justice System Condoning

CRIME WITHOUT PUNISHMENT.

For years, it's been an open secret: Criminals in Charlotte are getting away with robbery, rape, assault and sometimes even murder. But the severity of the problem wasn't clear until The Observer published *Doing the Crime But Not the Time*, a definitive study of crime and punishment in Mecklenburg County and North Carolina.

Reporters interviewed hundreds of victims, inmates, prosecutors and police officers. They sat in on behind-the-scenes meetings in which court officials decide which suspects will be charged, and which will go free. They used computer databases to analyze how often crimes led to prison terms.

What The Observer's reporters found was alarming:

If you commit a violent crime in Charlotte, you're only half as likely to go to prison as are criminals across the rest of the state.

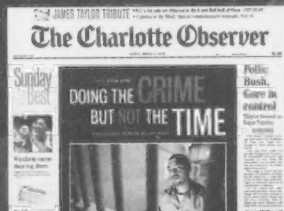
Violent crimes in Charlotte's poorest neighborhoods are far less likely to be punished than those in affluent areas. And criminals who escape punishment often go on to victimize others.

Slim court resources are largely to blame. Mecklenburg County has fewer prosecutors than any U.S. city its size. Saddled with too much crime and too few resources, prosecutors throw out thousands of cases, including more than half of all felonies that police want prosecuted.

The Observer's coverage has begun to make a serious difference. The legislature agreed to put up money for two new Mecklenburg County judges. Key state lawmakers say they will push to reform court funding formulas. And county officials are seeking state approval to make felons pay higher court costs.

Knight Ridder commends The Charlotte Observer and its staff for what their investigative coverage has done to help restore justice to the criminal justice system.

Knight Ridder. What a difference a newspaper can make.



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- » Fort Worth Star-Telegram
- » Saint Paul Pioneer-Press
- » Contra Costa Newspapers
- » Philadelphia Daily News

- » Akron Beacon Journal
- » The (Columbia, S.C.) State
- » Lexington (Ky.) Herald-Leader
- » The Wichita (Kan.) Eagle
- » The Muscon (Ga.) Telegraph
- » Tallahassee (Fla.) Democrat
- » The (Wilkes-Barre, Pa.) Times Leader
- » Duluth (Minn.) News-Tribune
- » Belleville (Ill.) News-Democrat
- » Columbus (Ga.) Ledger-Enquirer
- » The (Biloxi, Miss.) Sun Herald

- » The (Fort Wayne, Ind.) News-Sentinel
- » The (Myrtle Beach, S.C.) Sun News
- » Bradenton (Fla.) Herald
- » Grand Forks (N.D.) Herald
- » The (San Luis Obispo, Calif.) Tribune
- » The Monterey County (Calif.) Herald
- » (State College, Pa.) Centre Daily Times
- » Aberdeen (S.D.) American News
- » Warner Robins (Ga.) Daily Sun
- » The Olathe Daily News

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